

THE BOOK *of* RUTH



WILLIAM A. QUAYLE



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THE BOOK OF RUTH



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The BOOK of RUTH

WITH A SYNTHESIS
by
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ILLUSTRATED
by
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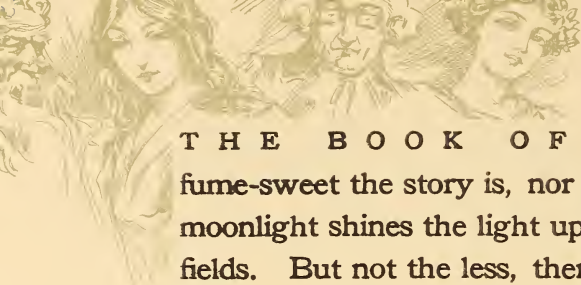
THE BOOK *of* RUTH

THE STORY



HERE are many beautiful stories; but one than which there is none more beautiful is the book called "Ruth."

It was written long ago. Its author is unknown. It is hid away from the eyes of many who love noble books by being in the Bible, that library of thoughts and sayings and doings which make those both great and good who translate them into life. If "The Book of Ruth" had been printed in a volume by itself, and had passed from hand to hand as the writing of some sweet, unknown genius, people would have raved over it: as the matter now stands, few know it as a literary masterpiece. Few have considered how per-



THE BOOK OF RUTH

fume-sweet the story is, nor how beyond moonlight shines the light upon its barley fields. But not the less, there stands the touching, idyllic story named "Ruth." Its pages are full of witchery. Whatever stories fade and pass like moaning of autumn wind, this story will abide. It has in it love, and fealty to duty, and the quiet wonder of the harvest field and the sky, and the sound of sobs, and the sound of gentle laughter, and the wistful face of one dear woman, on whom to look is to have procured a picture whose loveliness abides forever.

Suppose we do this,—compare "Rip Van Winkle," "The Vicar of Wakefield," "Lorna Doone," "As You Like It" and "Ruth," and see how the far-away Hebrew idyll fares. These later stories all have that indescribable thing called atmosphere. We see and feel the landscape of

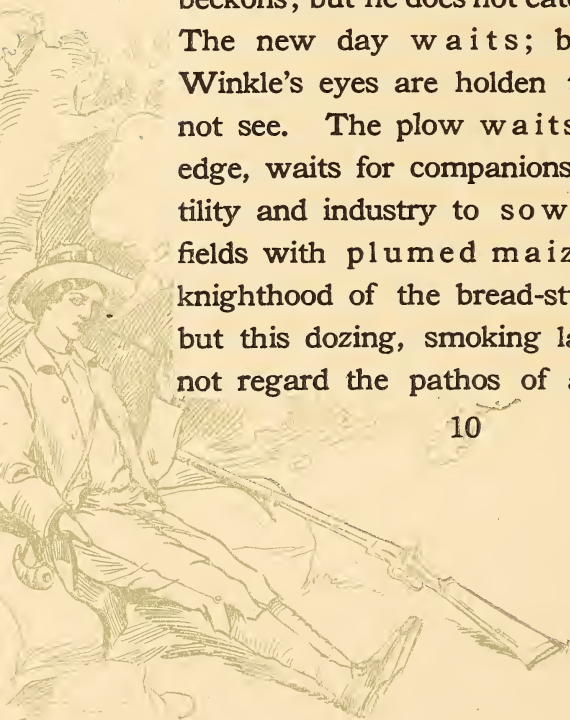
T H E B O O K O F R U T H

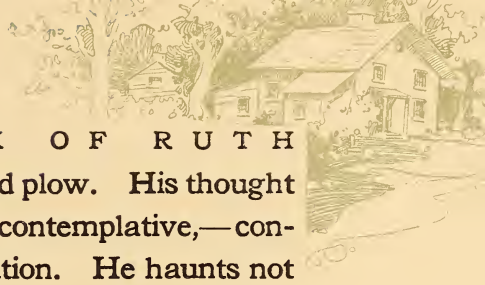
them. We see Rip Van Winkle losing himself in the blue of distant hills. "The Vicar of Wakefield" brings home-hurt and home-help to all our hearts. "Lorna Doone" brings springtime with its willowy song into the breast of all who company with Jan and Lorna. "As You Like It" makes all the world a lover and all the lovers glad, and sings with forest madrigals to every lover heart. Ah, Rosalind! What these stories have in common are atmosphere and immortality.

"Rip Van Winkle" is a tale of the new world. It haunts the Hudson and Catskills. The uplands, back-lands and out-lands are on the frontier. Beyond them gloom black forests, pathless, obscure, danger-haunted. Bronze panthers with bent bow at the fingers lurk, ready for the fatal spring. They are always at fury-point. The sunset owns this new

T H E B O O K O F R U T H
world, sunrise and all. Here men follow
the chariot of the sun while it drives into
the Western sea.

This new world does not thrill Rip
Van Winkle. He is phlegmatic, apa-
thetic, inept to catch the lightning's hand
and run across the world. Toil does not
bathe his face with wholesome sweat.
He sits and smokes; and the smoke
circles above his head as lazily as even
so lazy a man might wish. The furrow
beckons; but he does not catch the signal.
The new day waits; but Rip Van
Winkle's eyes are holden that he does
not see. The plow waits at the field
edge, waits for companionship with fer-
tility and industry to sow the waiting
fields with plumed maize, the very
knighthood of the bread-stuff growths;
but this dozing, smoking lassitude does
not regard the pathos of an unplowed

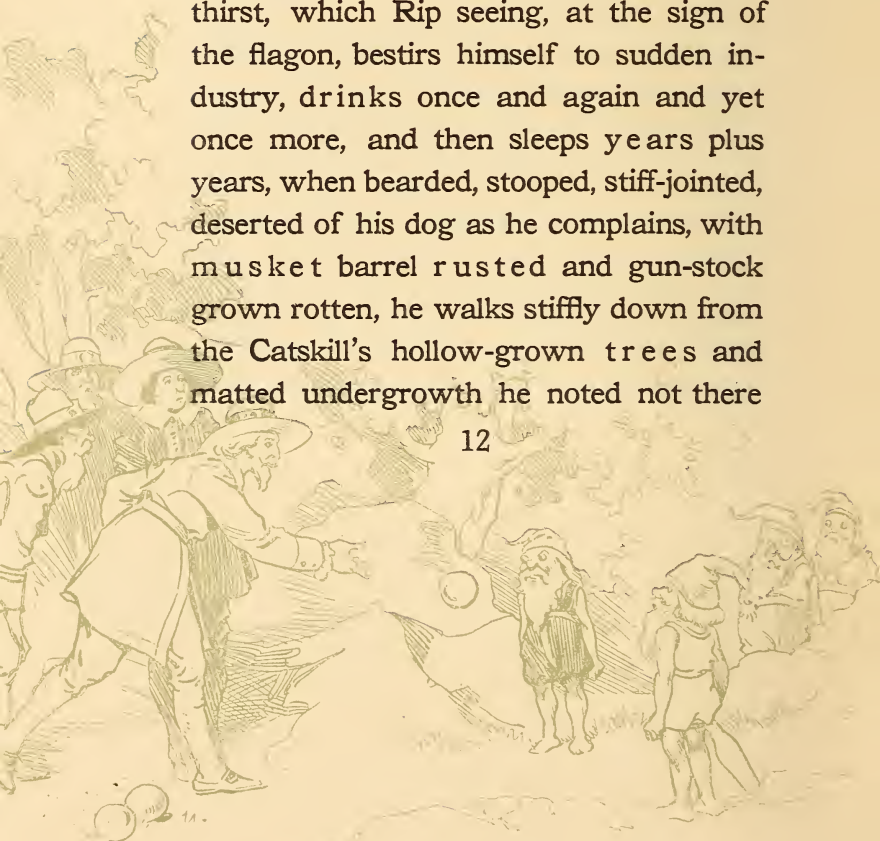




T H E B O O K O F R U T H
field nor of an unused plow. His thought
and his frame are contemplative,—con-
templative of recreation. He haunts not
the corn fields but the hills. His dog and
gun and he, (he being most dishonored of
the triumvirate) a set of vagabonds, go
lazing to the Catskill's paths or lie ob-
scured in Catskill's shadows. That his
children are barefoot and tattered, his
wife scandalously clad and gifted with a
scolding tongue, howbeit urged thereto
by her vagabond husband, whose sole
occupation is to be occupationless,—these
things stir not the manliness of this knight
of inactivity. The Catskills stand, blue
like a haze a puff of wind might blow
away, and their ways are sinuous and
their steeps are not over precipitous and
their waters babble down rocky hollows
where man and dog stop to drink, and in
some shadow of rock and pine, they

THE BOOK OF RUTH

twain, the gun between them, lie and sleep, to wake and sociably cook a rabbit which dog and gun have caught napping. Once too often Rip goes from his field to the mountains mellow in the sun, and finds in a hid hollow of distant hills a company of Hendrick Hudson's fellow voyagers solemnly bowling with never a smile shining in their eyes, and stopping from their grave occupations to swig at a keg to slake a grave man's thirst, which Rip seeing, at the sign of the flagon, bestirs himself to sudden industry, drinks once and again and yet once more, and then sleeps years plus years, when bearded, stooped, stiff-jointed, deserted of his dog as he complains, with musket barrel rusted and gun-stock grown rotten, he walks stiffly down from the Catskill's hollow-grown trees and matted undergrowth he noted not there



THE BOOK OF RUTH

the night before; for he thinks it is but morning of another day. He comes to his town to find himself forgotten, laughed at, and with a battle for freedom lying behind him, fought what time he slept with gun loaded. He fired no shot for liberty—and finds himself arrived at a worthless man's destination—"Harvestless."

The plot of earth God gave to me to till,

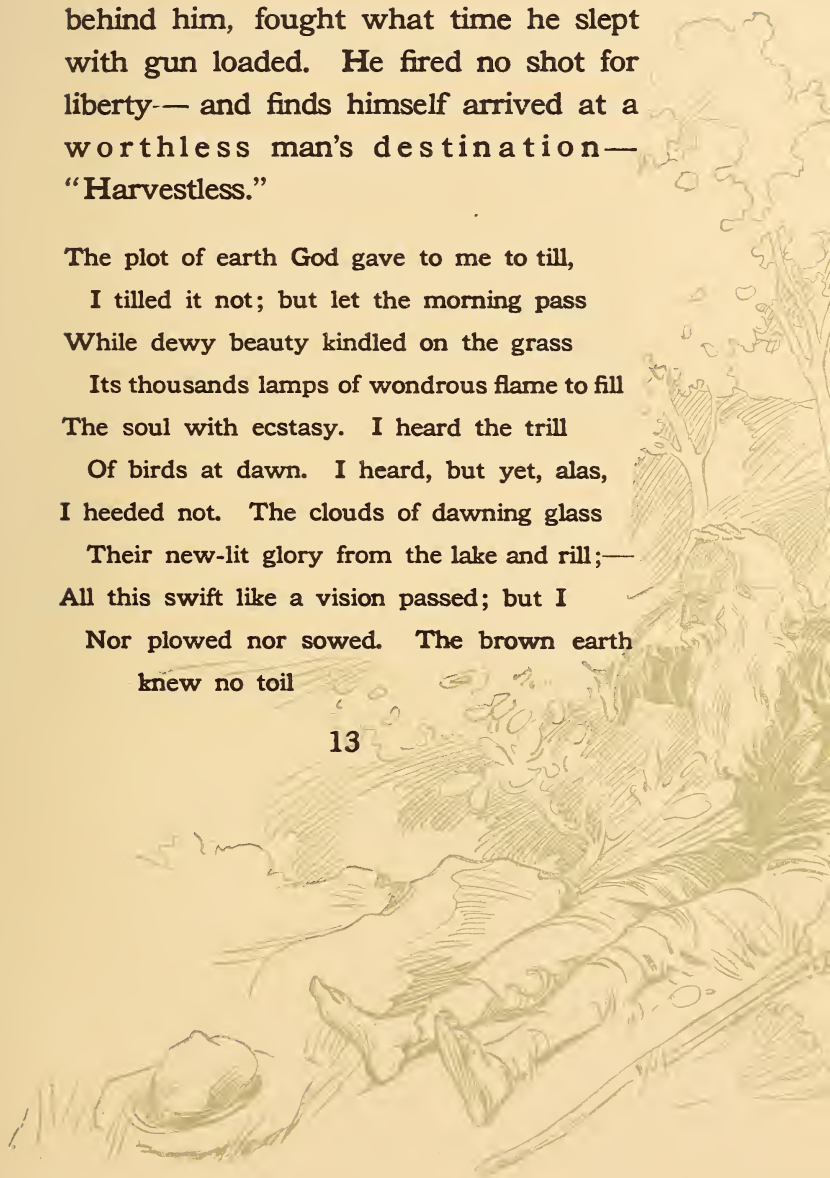
I tilled it not; but let the morning pass
While dewy beauty kindled on the grass

Its thousands lamps of wondrous flame to fill
The soul with ecstasy. I heard the trill

Of birds at dawn. I heard, but yet, alas,
I heeded not. The clouds of dawning glass

Their new-lit glory from the lake and rill;—
All this swift like a vision passed; but I

Nor plowed nor sowed. The brown earth
knew no toil



THE BOOK OF RUTH

Of mine. The while fair day swept by, the
soil

That yearned for sowing, yearned in vain.

Gone by

God's hour. No sheaf of gold is mine.

The sky

Burns red with sunset. Harvestless I die.

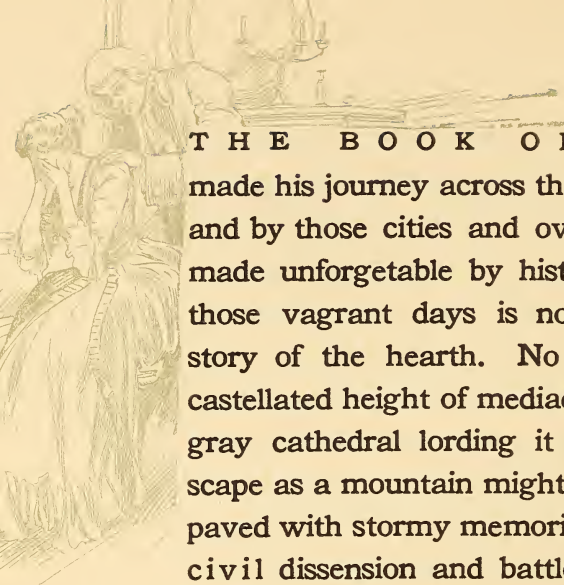
But the woodlands, the skies, the
paths, the pines with brooding shadows
and music, the gullies thicket-grown, the
purling streams, the shimmer of the hills
and the beckoning of them, the Indian
Summer dateless and melancholy, the
wood-smoke climbing the fair sky with
its blue incense, the tattered man, the
faithful though foolish dog, which wags
tail and looks into its tattered master's
face with a mute and tearful canine
fidelity, the unplowed and weedy
field, the broken fences, the disarray of

THE BOOK OF RUTH

baleful indolence, the children ragged and vagrant, and at the close, the deserted house and the dead wife and the forgotten man and the empty hands,—these are the shadow cast by the story of “Rip Van Winkle.” In this new-world idyll is the blowing of a lonesome pipe like that of a forsaken shepherd on the hills; and this sadness, the sadness of great things for the doing and the doing them not, gathers its Indian Summer on the hills and under the sun and over the fitful sea, we knowing scarcely how nor even why. Yet the tale, withal, is the weary shadow of a wasted life. We hear no song in “Rip Van Winkle.”

“The Vicar of Wakefield,” as everybody knows who reads books at all, was written by Oliver Goldsmith, who with a flute for passage-money wandered over Europe. To the sound of his flute he



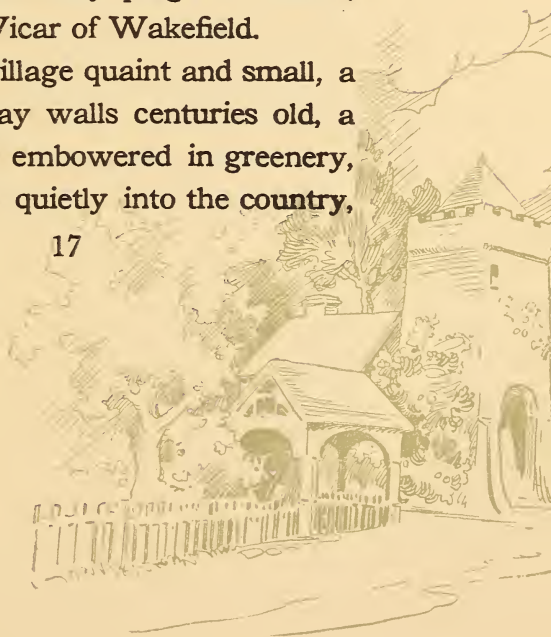


THE BOOK OF RUTH made his journey across those plains and and by those cities and over those Alps made unforgettable by history. But of those vagrant days is no hint in this story of the hearth. No history from castellated height of mediaeval story, nor gray cathedral lording it over a landscape as a mountain might, nor any city paved with stormy memories of siege and civil dissension and battle and empire, give faintest suggestion in this pathetic narrative. Goldsmith needed not to have passed from sight of the village steeple where he was born to have penned this exquisite pastoral. I think it significant and gladdening that the larger sayings of the world are not travelled sayings—they are evermore soul-sayings. We dredge the soul to get the heavenly heights. The deep things are not to be had by sight-seeing in however distant

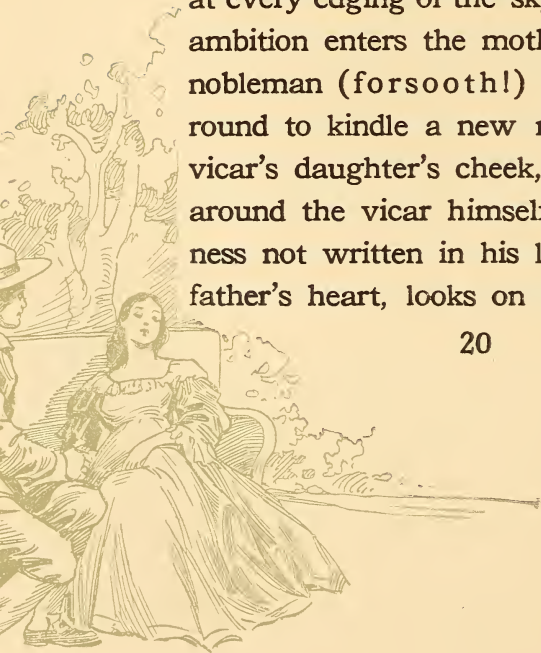
THE BOOK OF RUTH

lands, but in staying at home with the heart. Kant, who wrote as profound a philosophy, perhaps, as has brooded over any man since Plato's broad brow wrinkled to high thoughts, was not in all his life outside Königsburg. "The Vicar of Wakefield" is what Goldsmith remembered of his preacher father, and is a testimonial which a son, who was not harassed by virtue, wrote of his father whose worth it was that he made a habit of growing "the white flower of a blameless life." A wanderer's sweet memory of his home,—a son's deathless recollection of a father who was stronger and tenderer than any page of fiction, could define a Vicar of Wakefield.

Here is a village quaint and small, a church with gray walls centuries old, a manse beside it embowered in greenery, a village fading quietly into the country,

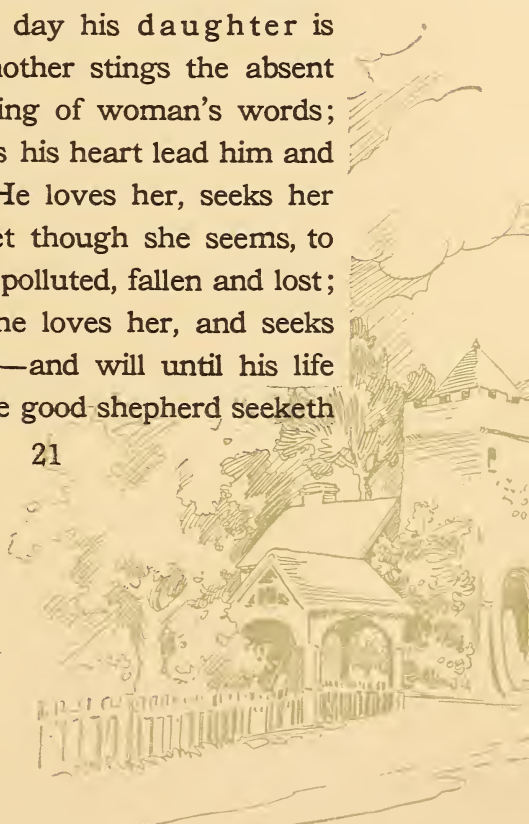


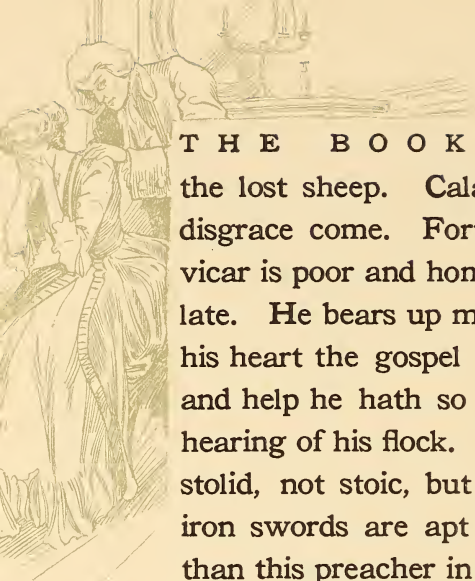
THE BOOK OF RUTH
versation. The village preacher is calmly good and greatly loved, and sees his family grow like flowers. He has sturdy comfort in the hearthstone of his heart, nor ever hungers for the crowded ways where cities cloud the blue, high sky with smoke nor leave a loophole for the transient light of one lone star. He loves this homely life and is satisfied if only he may so bestow his care as to merit the approving smile of the "Shepherd and Bishop of our souls." Things go well with him and his. Life is roseate at every edging of the sky,—until finally ambition enters the mother heart and a nobleman (forsooth!) comes slying around to kindle a new rose-tint on the vicar's daughter's cheek, which slying around the vicar himself, with shrewdness not written in his looks but in his father's heart, looks on first with scant



THE BOOK OF RUTH

favor, then with spoken hostility, thenceforward with deep and growing perplexity, then with manlike submission to his superior, his wife. We note and love his quiet manliness, his love of homelike ways, his distrust of tawdry habiliments and his averseness to living beyond the family means, his slyly tipping the face-wash into the fire, his demure simplicity, his observance of a beautiful hospitality and tenderness, his wild leap of heart-ache when on a day his daughter is missing, The mother stings the absent daughter with sting of woman's words; but the vicar lets his heart lead him and is very gentle. He loves her, seeks her and loves her yet though she seems, to all eyes save his, polluted, fallen and lost; but fallen or no he loves her, and seeks her with prayers—and will until his life shall cease. The good shepherd seeketh





THE BOOK OF RUTH
the lost sheep. Calamities other than
disgrace come. Fortune is lost. The
vicar is poor and homeless but not deso-
late. He bears up manfully. He has in
his heart the gospel whose praise, profit
and help he hath so often valued in the
hearing of his flock. He is not grim, not
stolid, not stoic, but human-tender; yet
iron swords are apt to be afraid more
than this preacher in an unnoted town to
be afraid of calamity or disgrace. He is
solely afraid of a soiled heart, and please
God he will keep his life pure. His quest
for his lost daughter never slumbers.
He hears of her afar: he finds her: he
loves her so that we do as the daughter
did, weep happy tears. There is Christ-
likeness abroad when this Vicar of
Wakefield goes upon a journey. His
daughter fades like a plucked flower.
He finds to his heart's ease that she was

T H E B O O K O F R U T H

married; she was not wicked but deceived; and the good man makes a prayer of thanksgiving unto God which sounds like a psalm of David to the Lord. His daughter is heartbroken, not wicked; and her father has a contentment like that which broods above a summer sea. By the machinations of his daughter's abductor he is thrown into prison because he will not take a price for a daughter's broken heart. He turns the prison into a church of God. He is the vicar of the prison. The gentleness which makes men great, is on him. Wherever he is, all is bettered. The sneers of his fellow prisoners, what time he reads the prayers, abate. They are not quite devils though they are wicked men. And at the last all comes well. 'Tis the "Book of Job" rehearsed once more, save that Job dwelt in a desert and the Vicar of Wakefield is





THE BOOK OF RUTH
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T H E B O O K O F R U T H

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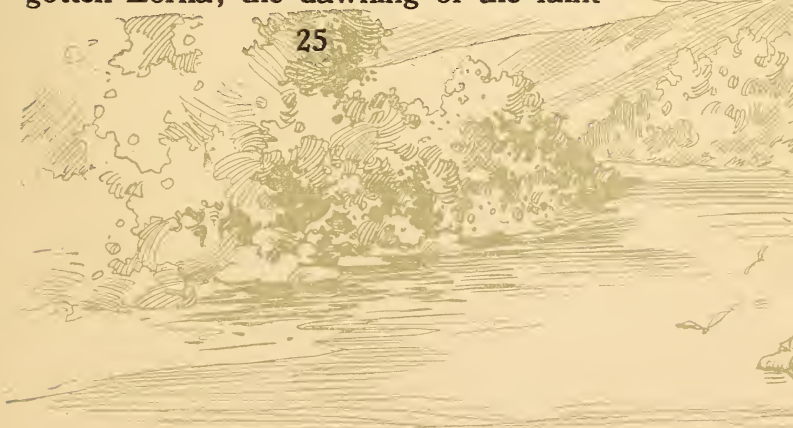
THE BOOK OF RUTH
a villager where the honeysuckles blow;
but both are loved of God. This story of
the home, this hymn of heartbreak of
life's every day, has smiled and wept its
way into this world's love irrevocably.
The sun will not set on "The Vicar of
Wakefield."

"Lorna Doone" is a romance of Ex-
moor. It neighbors the hills and the sea
and Bagworthy water. This is no
village story. Not any church spire is in
sight nor can you hear the ringing of
Sabbath bells. This is mid-country. This
is a farmer's story. It is a story of the
fields, the hedgerows, the brook warbling
by the house, the wheat stacks, the
"pegs" which as Betty Muxworthy says
must be "slopped," and by Jan Ridd, be-
times; the deep chimney where the
flitches of bacon hang at smoke; the
cider, yellow as autumn sunlight; the



THE BOOK OF RUTH

sweet widowed mother with her woman's fear and mother love and care for everybody, but in particular for Jan, doting on Jan; the waspish-tongued serving woman Betty, who rules the household with an iron scepter, but whose heart is yet a woman's heart and aches in chime with Jan Ridd's ineffectual love, and her fierce whisper "I love it in thee, mon"; the quiet of the world the farming of the fields, the remoteness of the world heard of like a distant surf, a-sounding in the night; the forests, the hedgerows down which the robber Doones make thieving journey, the fearsome Doones in fastness in the hills; the barefoot Jan who goes to get loaches for his mother when she is sick, the barefoot ascent of the climbing, slippery water and the finding of Lorna at the top,— little Lorna, never-to-be-forgotten Lorna; the dawning of the faint



THE BOOK OF RUTH

star of love, the growing of fatherless Jan Ridd till he came to be of giant proportions, his quaint simplicity, his gentle kindness, his purity, his bravery, his growing love for Lorna; his dream that will not die, his love which knows not any fear but climbs to the door of death for a moment and a kiss; his modesty which knows not itself modest, his language, rude with the rudeness of Will Shakespeare, poet; his awe of the sea, of women, specially of the one woman, Lorna; his sense of the wonder of the dawn and the night and the dark and of the lighted stars; his love of labor, his sturdy manliness which refused to be elated when knighted by the king; his superhuman strength which with one mighty twist broke an oak tree's arm to slay Carver Doone when that valiant (?) robber had, as Jan Ridd thought, slain Lorna his be-



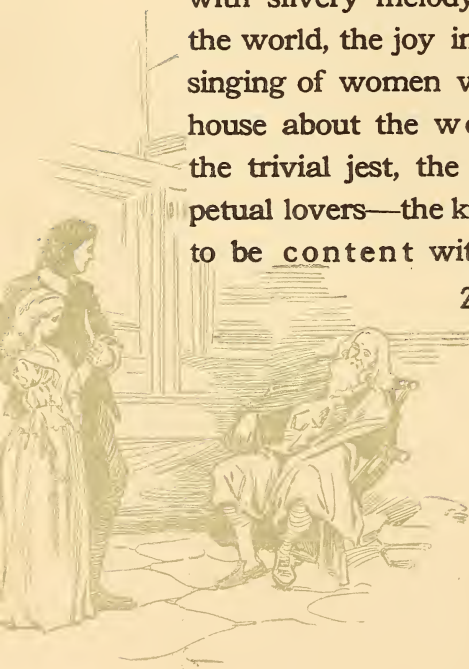
T H E B O O K O F R U T H
loved, and the rapture of love realized
when Jan Ridd, after a long illness in
which he comes near to die from the
bullet of Carver Doone, murderer, finds
her still alive. And so is the idyll of love
swept out into the summer land, the
old summer land, the dear summer land
of lovers who go as they will, God being
with them and they with each other, and
well content to have no other company.
One only lack is in this idyll of "Lorna
Doone." I miss the voice of a baby. If
there were children at the house of Jan
and Lorna Ridd we have not seen their
faces nor heard their voices singing, nor
saying evening prayer. But "Lorna
Doone" is certain of immortality. Such
as have hearts and love God and folks
and the out-under-the-sky, will love
"Lorna Doone" as lastingly as living. I
read it in the winter when the winds are

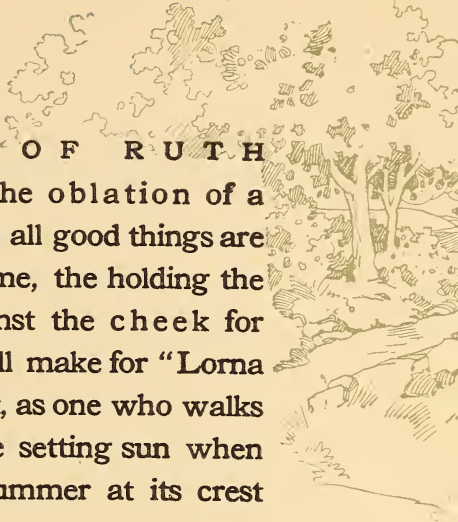
THE BOOK OF RUTH
wild because it is spring banks and vio-
lets when I am beside Jan Ridd of
"Hexmore" and his fair Lorna. He is as
the country dweller seldom is, ever awake
to the poetry of growing things. To
him nature was not parable, but homely,
daily talk. The sky's twilight drenched
his heart like the dew and gave to him
the gift

"Of saying things

Too tender and too deep for words."

I pray my God I may never grow so old
but that "Lorna Doone" shall make all
the bells in the steeple of my heart to ring
with silvery melody. The wild life of
the world, the joy in homely things, the
singing of women voices in the country
house about the work, the laughter at
the trivial jest, the holding hands—per-
petual lovers—the knowing no more than
to be content with daily mercies, the





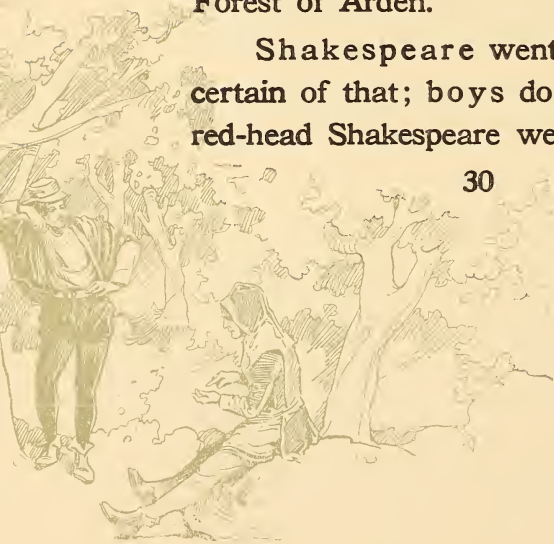
THE BOOK OF RUTH

rendering unto God the oblation of a grateful heart because all good things are come when love is come, the holding the whole out-doors against the cheek for love of it—all these will make for "Lorna Doone" a path of light, as one who walks a footpath toward the setting sun when skies are clear and Summer at its crest of wave.

And then "As You Like It." This is once where I wish Shakespeare had named his drama by another name. Not to criticise. I could not criticise Shakespeare. How could I, and he so strange and majestic; but I wish. If he had called that incomparable pastoral poetry "The Forest of Arden," I should have loved that. There had I lounged in the shadows all the day, the dreamy delicious day, and far into the dusk and farther into the lighting of the stars, and then

THE BOOK OF RUTH
into the dark, and the heartache of the
nightingale. Or had he named his poem
of hearts and laughter "Rosalind," how
had I loved that given-name for so sweet
a poetry. That dear name might have
been written in moonlight, and scrolled
by the tracery of wandering vines.
Rosalind! But not to bicker with The
Poet, but to listen to him. If he wills
to call his drama "As You Like It," I
will name it "As You Like It;" Shake-
speare's will shall be mine. He loved his
mother, as you may guess, because he
names this dreamy wood where love is
lulist, after his mother, Mary Arden,—
names his everlasting summer land, his
eternized lovers' trysting place, The
Forest of Arden.

Shakespeare went barefoot. Be
certain of that; boys do not go where
red-head Shakespeare went, amongst all



THE BOOK OF RUTH

wild flowers and running streams, except they be barefoot. Barefoot came he quietly where he could slip up unbeknown on the violet, and lie so close that he would ever after know to call it "The dim violet"—name of all names now that he has called it so. And barefoot was the lad who learnt the mystic music, half odor and half sound,

"O it came o'er my ear

Like the sweet South that breathes
above

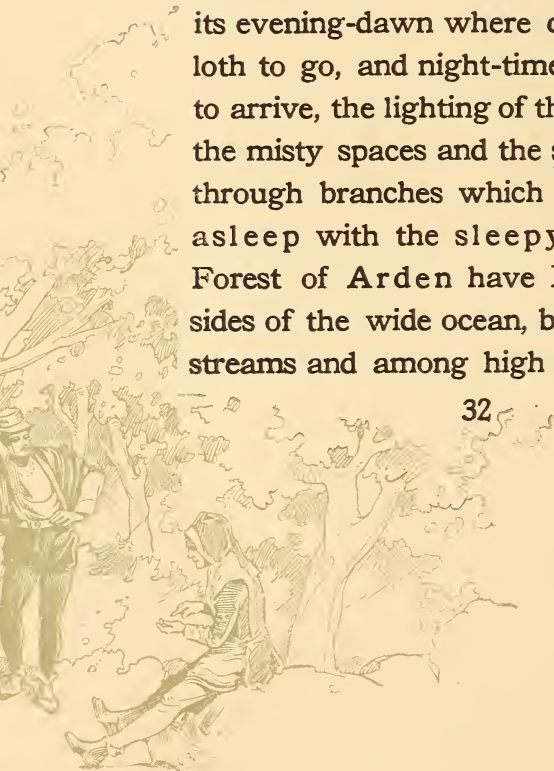
A bank of violets, stealing and giving
odors."

He was a country lad and barefoot, to whom the violets and the wind whispered. Secrets intimate as these come solely to barefoot boys with "morning face." The Forest of Arden is as I like it, the idyll of the windy sky and of the swaying trees and of the wild flowers at blossom-

THE BOOK OF RUTH
ing, and of love at blossoming like the
wild flowers. This Forest of Arden
might be anywhere. Truth to say it is
everywhere. Myself have seen its cool
shadows, its mossy banks, its whispering
waters, its sweet growing things, its in-
vitation to be quit of care, its hospitable-
ness to lovers and to love, its tree trunks
which the lips of love had kissed, its day
dawn which

“Stands tiptoe on the misty mountain
top,”

its evening-dawn where daylight lingers
loth to go, and night-time hastens eager
to arrive, the lighting of the starry lamps,
the misty spaces and the starlight sifting
through branches which are falling fast
asleep with the sleepy birds. Such
Forest of Arden have I seen on both
sides of the wide ocean, beside wayward
streams and among high mountains and



THE BOOK OF RUTH

on wide prairies, and ofttimes in very hearing of the chansons of the sea. And always in The Forest of Arden were Orlando and Rosalind, Rosalind and Orlando, and the sweet dogmatisms and quiddities and sadness and song and tears and heartbreak of woe or joy, the momentous pathos and momentous regality of Love. Always Rosalind and Orlando, always listening to or writing poetry, and weaving dreams of moonbeams, and always hungry for a kiss.

So is "Rip Van Winkle" an idyll of the Occident beside an ever-waking, ever angry sea, and looking westward, ever westward toward grim, black frontiers of forest whose shaggy solitudes hide menace of wild beast and wilder men, yet for all an idyll with blue, dim distance, and haunting peace upon the hills.

The "Vicar of Wakefield" is an

THE BOOK OF RUTH
Irish idyll; for Oliver Goldsmith was
Irishman through all he was and all he
wrote; and this narrative of the hearth-
stone is gathered like morning flowers
from his heart.

“Lorna Doone” is an English land-
scape and holds an Exmoor man, sturdy,
habited for toil but not for fear, full of all
the happy wonder of the happy human
heart.

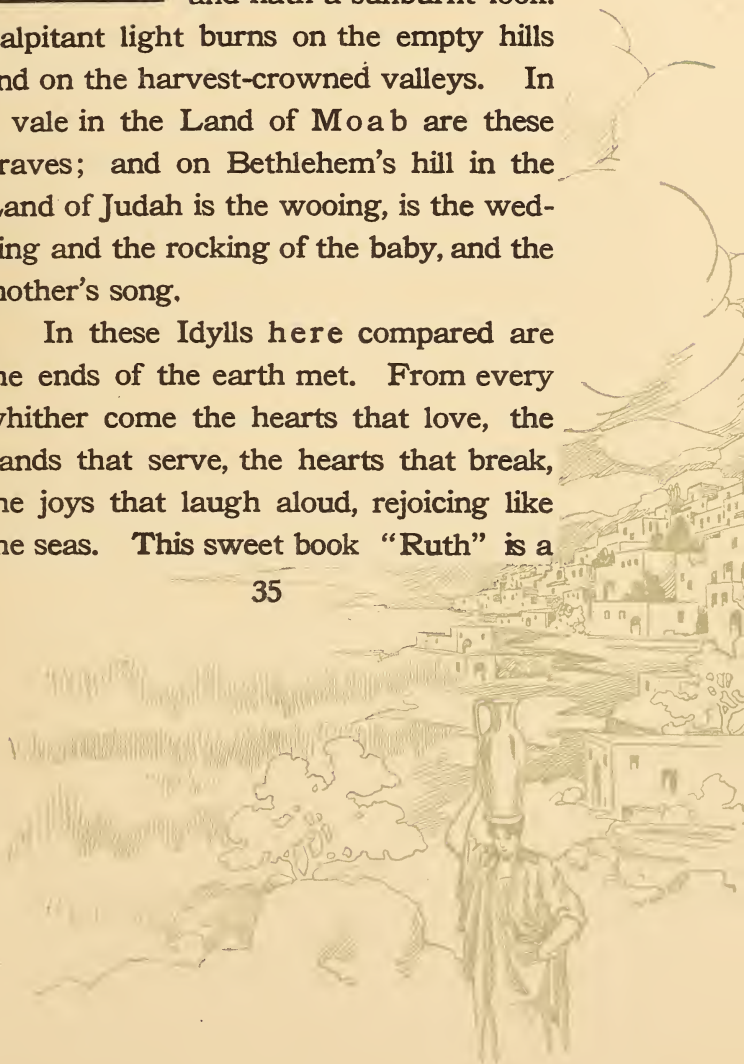
The landscape of “As You Like It”
is anywhere, is never local, has no geo-
graphy, has only topography. Nor old
world nor new, nor sunset lands nor sun-
rise lands. All the happy lands of love
which lie between can prove the Forest
of Arden to lie in their demesne. It lieth
everywhere, seeing it lieth anywhere.
Like Shakespeare, this Forest of Arden
is universal.



THE Book of Ruth is of the Orient. It lieth in the land of the Morning Sun close against the dawn and hath a sunburnt look.

Palpitant light burns on the empty hills and on the harvest-crowned valleys. In a vale in the Land of Moab are these graves; and on Bethlehem's hill in the Land of Judah is the wooing, is the wedding and the rocking of the baby, and the mother's song.

In these Idylls here compared are the ends of the earth met. From every whither come the hearts that love, the hands that serve, the hearts that break, the joys that laugh aloud, rejoicing like the seas. This sweet book "Ruth" is a



T H E B O O K O F R U T H
hollow of Orient hills, crowded with a
bewilderment of light.

Let the book of Ruth walk into this
midst. We feel the hush and share the
heartache and the homesickness and
heartsickness; we see the harvesting, and
the clean summer landscape, and the ris-
ing of the hot noon air, and house us in
the comfort of the shade at noon beside
the reapers and the gleaners where Ruth
alone sits solitary among the throng.
We see her brown lithe fingers gleaning
golden ears; we see the shadows of the
nighttime call the harvesters to sleep;
and one lone woman wends her way
along unaccustomed paths to a lone
mother's lonely door. The stars arise:
the reapers sing among the sheaves, the
lovers come; and love, old as earth and
new as morning, has love's way. And
lonely Ruth is lone and sad no more, for

THE BOOK OF RUTH

in her arms a baby coos and calls. And Moabiteess Ruth is ancestress of David, poet-king. Herself was poetess; and before her shine harp and sword—Poet David's harp and brawn David's sword. And, come to think of it, who among the singers of that elder day could have writ this prose poem, "Ruth," save Poet David—of the sheepfold, and the dawn, and the wistful quiet of the sunset and the dawn of stars where,

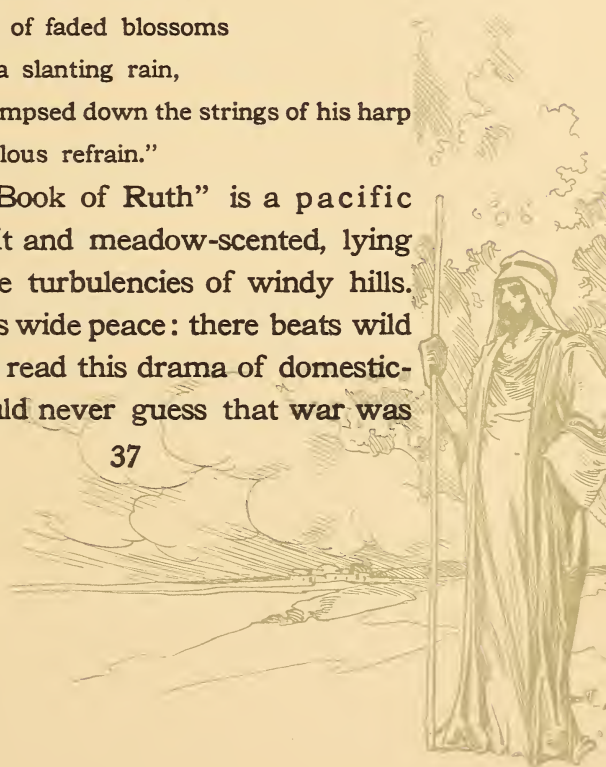
"Like a drift of faded blossoms

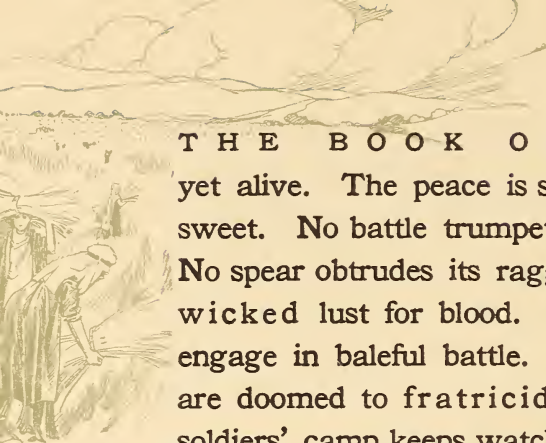
Caught in a slanting rain,

His fingers glimpsed down the strings of his harp

In a tremulous refrain."

"The Book of Ruth" is a pacific valley, sunlit and meadow-scented, lying between the turbulencies of windy hills. Here broods wide peace: there beats wild storm. To read this drama of domesticity one would never guess that war was





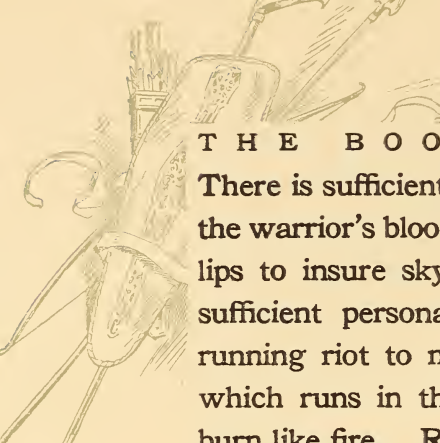
THE BOOK OF RUTH

yet alive. The peace is so profound, so sweet. No battle trumpet bellows war. No spear obtrudes its ragged edge with wicked lust for blood. No neighbors engage in baleful battle. No relatives are doomed to fratricidal war. No soldiers' camp keeps watch fires through the night. War must be a tale that is told. Battle flags have forgotten how to float. The world has crowded a world's width between sanguinary warfares. So does the quiet of "The Book of Ruth" hold its argument.

But let us tarry ere we haste. This is not, as it appears, the island valley of Avilion where comes not heat nor wind that blows in stormy moods, nor rest that wakens not to war, nor wrath that drags no sword from sheath, while time endures. This is not that island. What time of this world's calendar was writ up

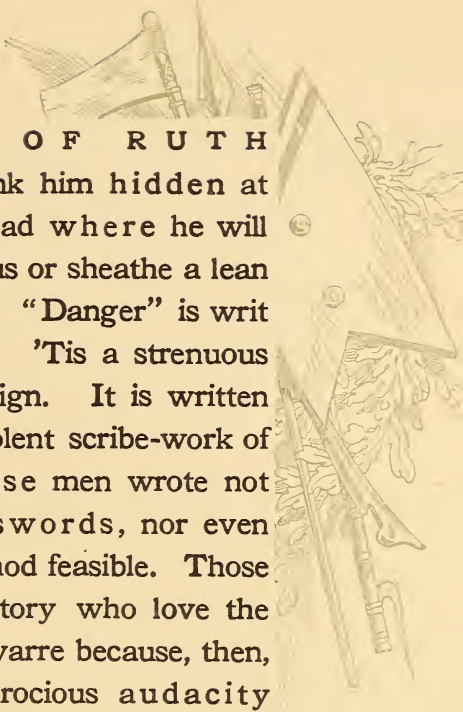
T H E B O O K O F R U T H
on the wall when Ruth went glean-
ingly through the corn? H e a r k e n :
“Now it came to pass in the days when
the Judges ruled.” This is a blunder, a
surly blunder by some surly blunderer of
a scribe. This can not be. The days of
the Judges were such as we shall not
wish to have repeated in Israel’s story
nor in the story of this world. “In those
days there was no king in Israel” is what
we read, and then there is set down in
serious veracity what we need not be
slow to believe, that—“Every man did
that which was right in his own eyes.”
In stern words and true it is recorded
that the land had anarchy within. And
from a perusal of “The Book of Judges”
we are assured that the land had wars
without.

This “Book of Judges” contains suf-
ficient romance to stock endless centuries.

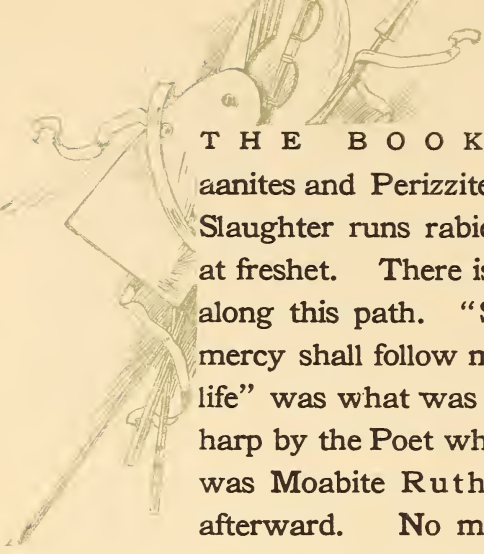


THE BOOK OF RUTH

There is sufficient interval of silence with the warrior's bloody finger pressed on the lips to insure sky for imagination, and sufficient personal prowess and daring running riot to make the warrior blood which runs in the veins of every man, burn like fire. Really, those hundreds of years when Judges were the guardians of Israel are filled with the din of war. A reader going through these pages, would set down at the close that he had been reading battle annals, nor ever need to correct his judgment. Battle broods near, as storms are always quick to gather round a mountain side. There is no place where we should feel it quite safe to travel alone, or sit down to rest and eat a little parched barley in the shade. The ruthless men, we feel, are ever near. That we see no foe, reassures us not at all. That he shows not his face,



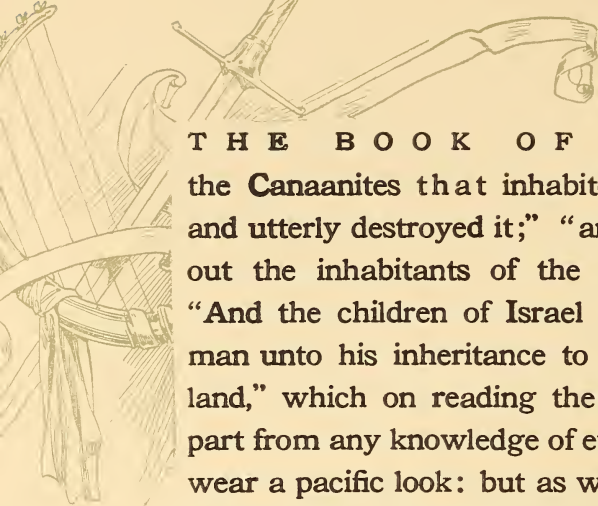
THE BOOK OF RUTH predisposes us to think him hidden at a turning of the road where he will measure spear with us or sheathe a lean sword in our breast. "Danger" is writ large on all this road. 'Tis a strenuous story, this Judges' reign. It is written with the stern and violent scribe-work of a battle spear. These men wrote not with pens but with swords, nor even thought a better method feasible. Those writers of fictive history who love the reign of Henry of Navarre because, then, manly sinews and ferocious audacity seemed ubiquitous, would find in the days of the Judges a time more thrilling by very far than those Navarre days when the white plume waved and men had no fear to die. "They slew of them in Bezek ten thousand men"—so "The Book of Judges" inaugurates its campaigns. "The Lord delivered the Can-



THE BOOK OF RUTH
aanites and Perizzites into their hands.”
Slaughter runs rabid as a winter stream
at freshet. There is no mercy following
along this path. “Surely goodness and
mercy shall follow me all the days of my
life” was what was sung to music on his
harp by the Poet whose sweet ancestress
was Moabite Ruth; but that must be
afterward. No mercy has stepped
on this field of war nor on these high-
ways among the fretful hills. “And
Adonibezek said, ‘Three score and ten
kings, having their thumbs and their
great toes cut off, gathered meat under
my table,’” nor did any one dispute his
saying. Bloody mercy was king of those
cruel days; and Adonibezek said on: “As
I have done, so God hath requited me.”
And he held up hands with the thumbs
cut off with the rude surgery of the
sword. He shall not draw bow on any

THE BOOK OF RUTH

battlefield or battle day again. Amenities were not citizens of those rough times. And the record with an even voice proceeds regarding Adonibezek with his dismantled warrior hands; "And they brought him to Jerusalem; and there he died." It reads like a ruthless paragraph from "Caesar's Commentaries" and reminds us how "the tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." Kindness had not come to live among men in the Judges' days. "Now the children of Judah had fought against Jerusalem—and had taken it—and smitten it with the edge of the sword—and set the city on fire, and afterwards,"—what woe is in that grim "afterwards"—"Judah went against the Canaanites that dwelt in Hebron and from thence he went against the inhabitants of Debir; and Judah went with Simeon his brother and they slew

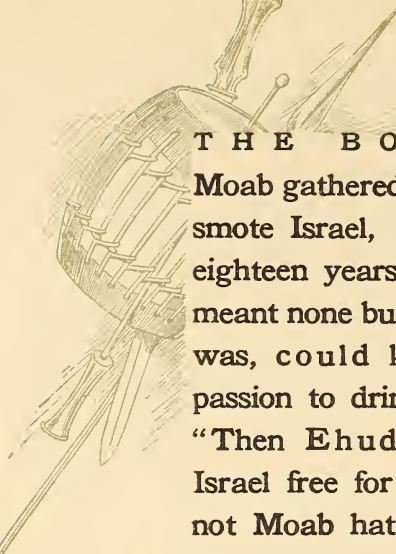


THE BOOK OF RUTH
the Canaanites that inhabited Zephath
and utterly destroyed it;" "and he drove
out the inhabitants of the mountain."
"And the children of Israel went every
man unto his inheritance to possess the
land," which on reading the incident a-
part from any knowledge of events would
wear a pacific look: but as we have not-
ed, the road to every inheritance was wet
with the blood of slaughtered enemies.
So does the opening of "The Judges"
ring with war. Every man is a soldier
and searching out his foe. And the book
proceeds consonant with the iron proem,—
this bitter battle proem. We hear not
much of the singing of the sickles and
the music of the flails, but much—so
much—of the swish of swords, of the
scream of dying men, or the curses of the
dispossessed. The plowshare is not
made of beaten swords; for the swords

THE BOOK OF RUTH

are all in active service, and, so far as we may understand the situation, are not allowed to rest. It is the plowshares which monopolize the rust.

The book moves on in its surly humor. The enemies are many and full of venomous hate. The strife is everywhere renewed. First one enemy rules Israel, then another; but there are enemies enough to go round. Israel seemed to have no end of enemies. "And when the Lord raised up Judges, then the Lord was with the Judges and delivered them out of the hands of their enemies," or another vivid phrasing has it; "delivered them out of the hands of those that spoiled them." Hand and sword against sword and hand—and the fight has no surcease. "And Othniel fought against the king of Mesopotamia and his hand prevailed against him." "Eglon king of

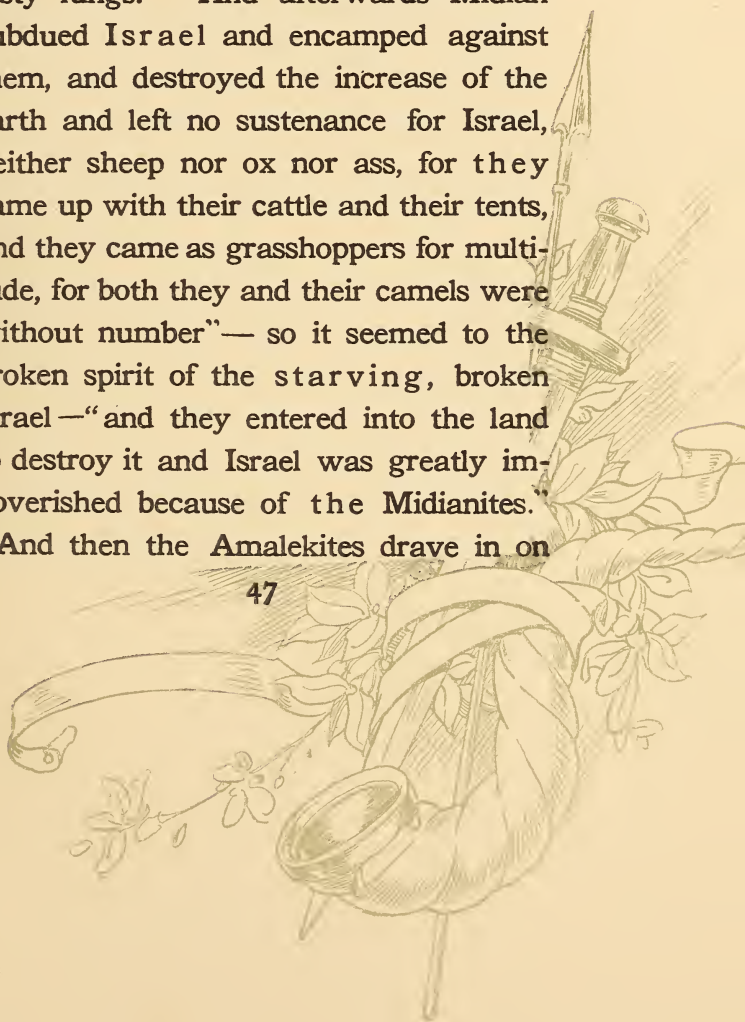


THE BOOK OF RUTH

Moab gathered Amorite and Amalek and smote Israel, and Israel served Moab eighteen years;" and what that phrase meant none but those whose the bondage was, could know. Imagination lacks passion to drink that cup of anguish. "Then Ehud slew Eglon and made Israel free for a little space." But did not Moab hate Israel still? "And they went down and took the fords of Jordan and slew of Moab at that time ten thousand men, all lusty and all men of valor; and there escaped not a man; and so Moab was subdued that day." With what relish is slaughter of hale men chronicled: "And Shamgar slew the Philistines with an ox goad," "and he also delivered Israel," and Deborah and Barak fought down "Jabin King of Canaan who mightily opposed Israel; and he had nine hundred chariots of iron." General Sis-

THE BOOK OF RUTH

era succumbed to the treachery of Jael and lay dead with the tent pin through his temples, "and the Israelites," we are cordially told, "prevailed against Jabin until they had utterly destroyed Jabin King of Canaan:" and then Deborah composed a song and Israel sang it with lusty lungs. "And afterwards Midian subdued Israel and encamped against them, and destroyed the increase of the earth and left no sustenance for Israel, neither sheep nor ox nor ass, for they came up with their cattle and their tents, and they came as grasshoppers for multitude, for both they and their camels were without number"—so it seemed to the broken spirit of the starving, broken Israel—"and they entered into the land to destroy it and Israel was greatly impoverished because of the Midianites." "And then the Amalekites drave in on



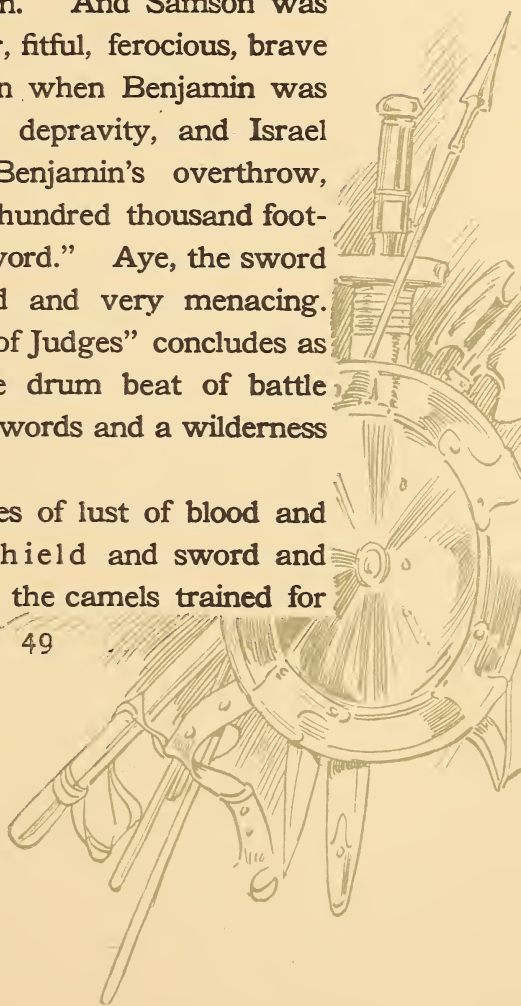
THE BOOK OF RUTH

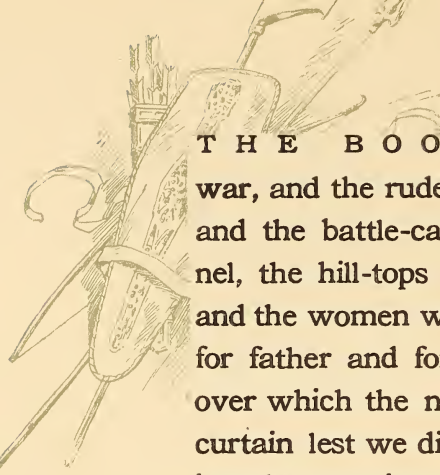
them also; and the children of the East, even, came up against them." "And to such a pass were the people brought that the children of Israel made them dens which are in the mountains, and caves and strongholds." Truly it goes hard with Israel. And Gideon, high man of valor, threshed wheat by the winepress to hide it from the Midianites. Then battle with Midian, and the lamps and the pitchers and the men, and Gideon and the Lord, and "The sword of the Lord and of Gideon" made Israel free men once more. "Thus was Midian subdued before the children of Israel so that they lifted up their heads no more." Battle, furious and sweaty and very bloody. War, war—and still war; and will there be any quiet ever?

Then were there wars domestic—but ever wars. Then once more the Phil-

THE BOOK OF RUTH
istines and Ammon had their way with Israel, so that Israel was sore distressed and Jephthah was the man of the hour, and celebrated his victory with sorrow deeper than death. Then again the Philistines subdued them for forty years, the life time of a man. And Samson was a vagrant warrior, fitful, ferocious, brave and weak. Then when Benjamin was guilty of horrible depravity, and Israel mustered to Benjamin's overthrow, "there were four hundred thousand footmen that drew sword." Aye, the sword is still unsheathed and very menacing. And "The Book of Judges" concludes as it began with the drum beat of battle and the crash of swords and a wilderness of graves.

Four centuries of lust of blood and arbitrament of shield and sword and spear and chariot, the camels trained for

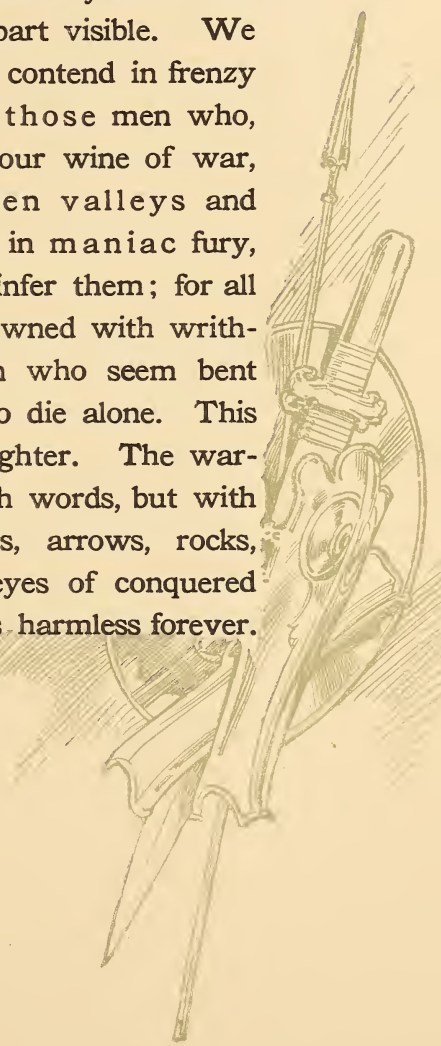


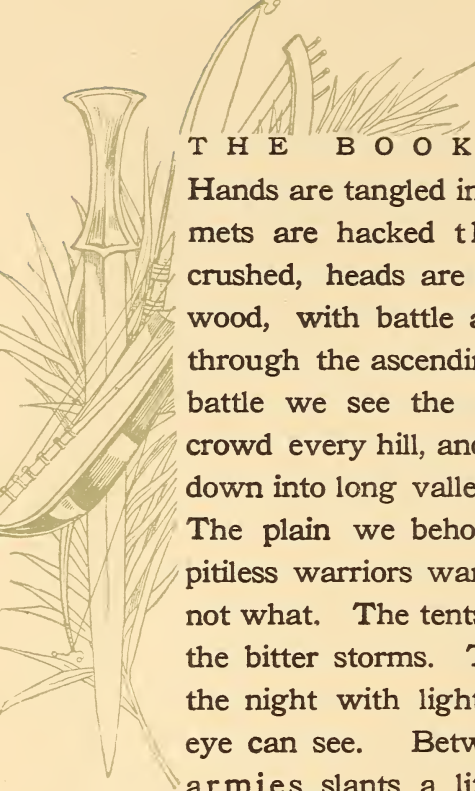


THE BOOK OF RUTH

war, and the rude eloquence of strength, and the battle-camp and tent and sentinel, the hill-tops used for watch-towers, and the women weeping for husband and for father and for son, and ruthlessness over which the narrative gently drops a curtain lest we die of heart-break, reading the atrocious story. No place for sleep save the sleep of death, no going slowly along under dim light of stars fearless of any foe; for all the world is drowned in battle violence and plunder and rapine without recourse. There is no avenger of blood for the slaughtered innocent multitudes. All war: no peace. The women sing their babes asleep to the minstrelsy of swords. This is the land of Fear and is patrolled by Master Perilous and Master Ruthless. "There fell a hundred and twenty thousand men that drew sword." Hear that

T H E B O O K O F R U T H
casualty list and become chief mourner. But no interlude allows our sobbing to ease itself a moment. The era of the Judges, judged from "The Book of Judges," was one of tragic battle prolonged through hundreds of years. The battle line is only in part visible. We see the armies which contend in frenzy on the hill-tops; but those men who, intoxicated with the sour wine of war, surged in the hidden valleys and maimed each other in maniac fury, we do not see. We infer them; for all the hill crests are crowned with writhing companies of men who seem bent on dying, but refuse to die alone. This is not suicide but slaughter. The warriors wrangle not with words, but with swords, axes, spears, arrows, rocks, spears thrust in the eyes of conquered foes to make warriors harmless forever.

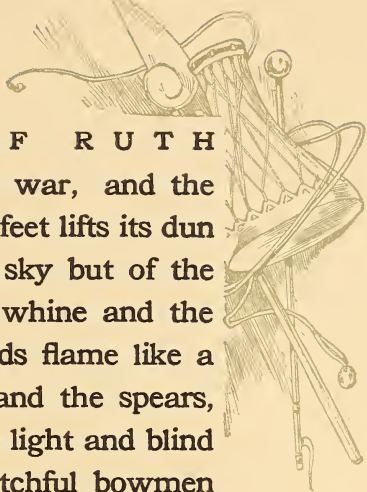


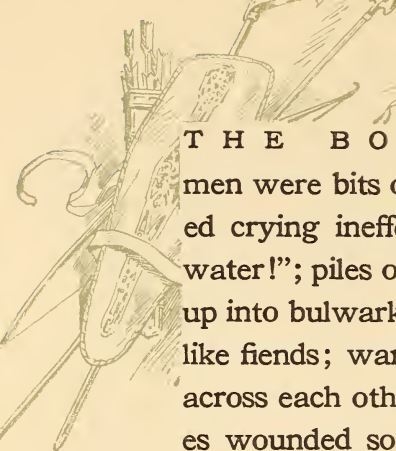


T H E B O O K O F R U T H

Hands are tangled in matted beards, helmets are hacked through, skulls are crushed, heads are split like blocks of wood, with battle ax or sword. So, through the ascending dust of this dire battle we see the lacerated throng crowd every hill, and crush bloody way down into long valleys filled with death. The plain we behold is thronged with pitiless warriors warring for they know not what. The tents gleam calm amidst the bitter storms. The watch fires star the night with lights as far as human eye can see. Between contending armies slants a little valley where a stream babbles by day and dark. Piti-fully often it runs not water but blood; still it babbles on like some poor babe who sits unknowingly by its dead mother, and plays with her hair and croons and smiles. The tara-tara- ta-

THE BOOK OF RUTH
ra of drums sounds ever war, and the
dust from the crowding feet lifts its dun
cloud, a cloud not of the sky but of the
earth, and the camels whine and the
horses neigh and the shields flame like a
city in conflagration, and the spears,
armies of them, catch the light and blind
the beholders, and watchful bowmen
stand with thumb and finger on the bow-
string and arrow, and the dull tread of
armed feet in swift advance or sullen
retreat, the flight of arrows shutting out
the sun with their swift cloud, and the
fierce hurrah and the chariots' crush on
chariots, and wounded horses littering up
the path and pawing with dying fury
many a soldier down, and the lift of head
and wild survey of the field of war as
many a horse calls like a wounded man,
and men trampling on men, and chariots
crushing men beneath their iron tires as if



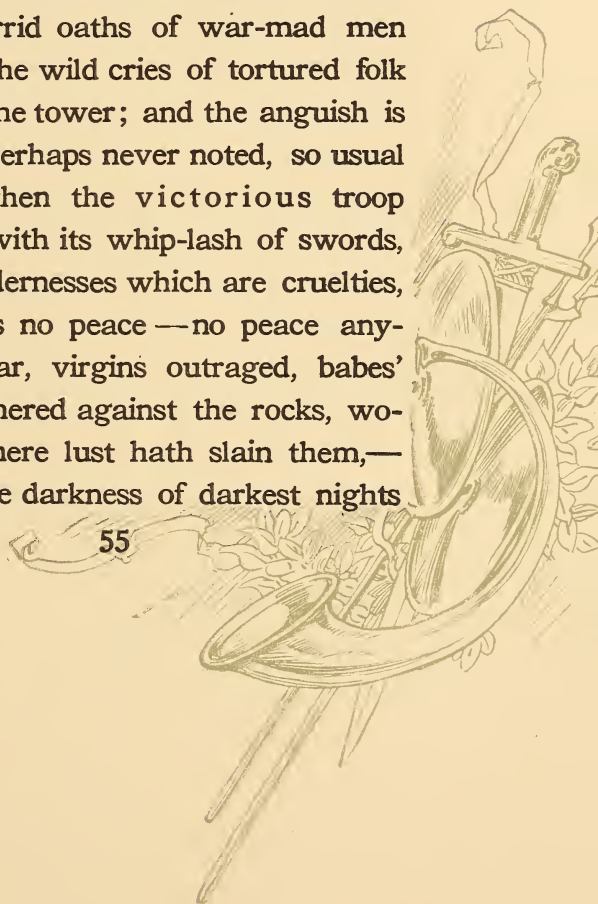


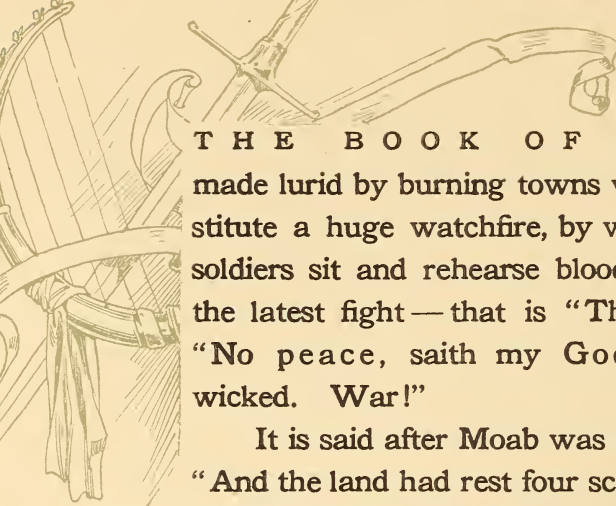
THE BOOK OF RUTH

men were bits of straw, and the wounded crying ineffectual cries for "water, water!"; piles of dead and wounded built up into bulwarks behind which men fight like fiends; warriors, friend or foe, fallen across each other in sudden amity; masses wounded so that they pray to die but their prayers unheeded, and the camps sacked and their jewels taken and their wounded slain, stabbed with spears drunk already with slaughter, and helpless or lusty men put to death with grim laughter, and when a city stands in the way of advance, with gloomy walls and narrow slits through which the assailed peer out, and through which the assailants' arrows can scarce peer in, and the battlements manned with maniacal men; and the victorious army halts awhile and lays siege and breaks the walls down with battering-rams, and on the assail-

THE BOOK OF RUTH

ants the defendants rain stones and fire and burning metal, and the wall is broken or scaled, and the defendants are put to the sword, and then if there are in an interior tower-house some warriors who refuse to come out to be butchered, the tower is burnt and all that inhabit it --women, children, men;—and the smell of burning human flesh offends the air, and the horrid oaths of war-mad men drown out the wild cries of tortured folk burning in the tower; and the anguish is ignored or perhaps never noted, so usual it is; and then the victorious troop tramps on with its whip-lash of swords, and the tendernesses which are cruelties, and there is no peace —no peace anywhere. War, virgins outraged, babes' heads hammered against the rocks, women left where lust hath slain them,—war, and the darkness of darkest nights



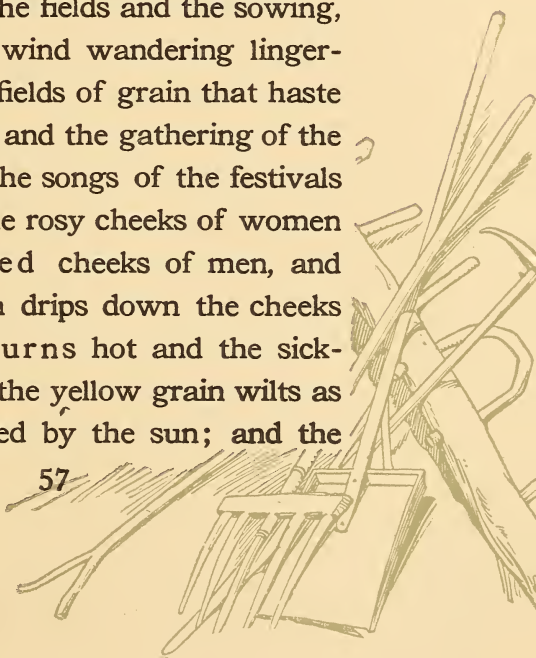


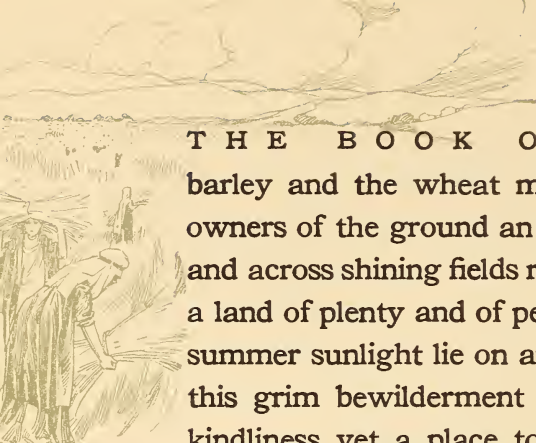
THE BOOK OF RUTH
made lurid by burning towns which constitute a huge watchfire, by which tired soldiers sit and rehearse bloody tales of the latest fight—that is “The Judges.”
“No peace, saith my God, to the wicked. War!”

It is said after Moab was subdued—
“And the land had rest four score years.”
And in some such breathing time amongst innumerable bloody frays, may have occurred the quiet wherein this story of Ruth had time to sow its field and gather in the harvests, and leave a quiet and safe path among the tortuous hills, where even the feet of lone women on their journey of tears could walk unhindered. Thanks be to God that even in the vast turbulence of those wild days of foray and cruelty there was some interval when the sweet business of being kind could have room

THE BOOK OF RUTH

for the display of its scant wares. The heart had always space for its uncontrollable wonder and its dreamful poetry. "The Book of Ruth" can quell the anguish of storms. Here is calm enough to take the rage from angered skies. After "Judges" comes "The Book of Ruth;" and after the wilderness of blowing bugles sounding war in "Judges," comes the swinging music of the flails in "Ruth," and the plowing of the fields and the sowing, and the south wind wandering lingeringly across the fields of grain that haste toward ripening, and the gathering of the harvesters, and the songs of the festivals of plenty, and the rosy cheeks of women and the bearded cheeks of men, and the sweat which drips down the cheeks when the sun burns hot and the sickles gleam; and the yellow grain wilts as flowers are wilted by the sun; and the



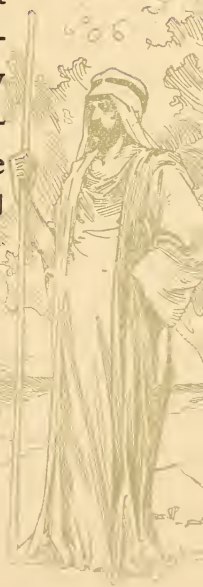


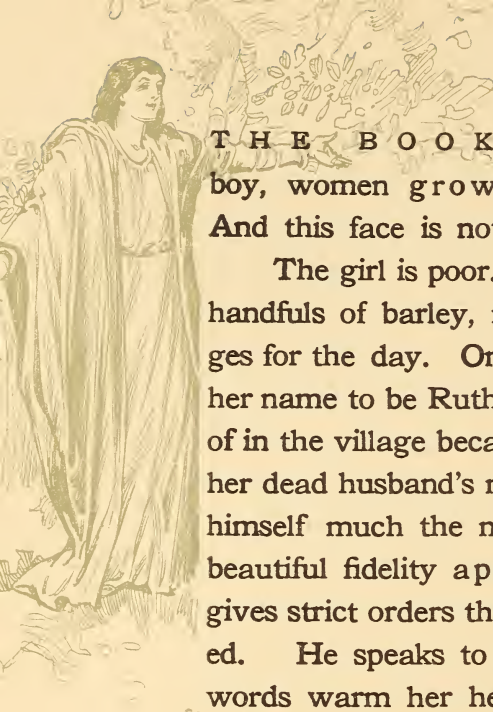
THE BOOK OF RUTH
barley and the wheat make the faces of owners of the ground an abundant smile, and across shining fields rings the cheer of a land of plenty and of peace. Can such summer sunlight lie on any landscape in this grim bewilderment of war? Has kindness yet a place to be neighborly, and may loneliness anywhere find a smile of welcome and mingle tears of regret? When we thought there was no spot left for such hallowed processes of the heart, then the sweet quiet of "The Book of Ruth" calls our hearts to prayer. God has a place of quiet left amongst the windy wildness of the stormy hills. Thank God! Peace has not altogether and forever vanished from the earth. The idea embodied in this idyll called "Ruth" must be that God has not altogether forsaken his world.

In an age which had scant notion of

THE BOOK OF RUTH

the value of woman, is written a poem to womankind. The two chief characters in this story are women, one old, one young, both widowed. The other character is a man, Boaz, middle-aged, rich, generous, manly, affable, clean, pure in thought and behavior, broad-minded, religious. You must like Boaz. Across the rippling barley fields you can hear his blithe salutation ring out like a quail's whistle over a field of growing corn. You see him, you feel him, you wish you had been his neighbor. His is a hearty face. His eyes are keen and miss nothing. They run over the faces of the harvesters and scan them thoroughly at a look. This is not the look of an inquisitor, but of a friend. He sees a new face among the gleaners. She, he opines, is not native to Bethlehem. He knows all the Bethlehem folk, girl and





THE BOOK OF RUTH

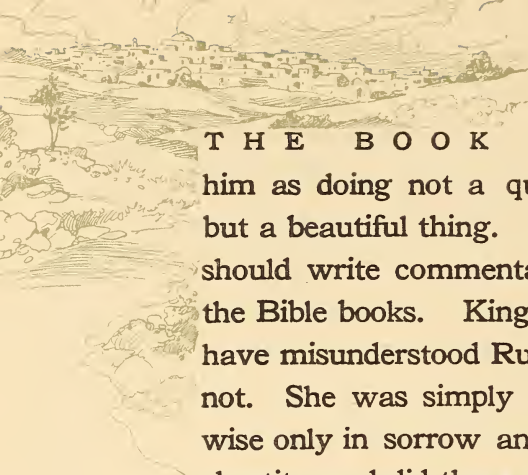
boy, women grown, and gray beard.
And this face is not one of them.

The girl is poor. She gleanes a few handfuls of barley, meant to be her wages for the day. On inquiry Boaz finds her name to be Ruth, a Moabitess, talked of in the village because of her fidelity to her dead husband's mother. Boaz shows himself much the man in that Ruth's beautiful fidelity appeals to him. He gives strict orders that she be not molested. He speaks to her kindly; and his words warm her heart like sunlight. He is not abrupt but frank, and she feels that she has found a friend. She is lonely, and so sad, and a kind word brings her comfort which is like strength. A man's voice has in it a courageousness to a woman, and with woman's intuition and divining, Ruth knows here is a man. She tarries a gleaner in his fields while

THE BOOK OF RUTH
barley harvest passes to wheat harvest,
and comes to feel herself, in part, at
home. In Ruth lying at the feet of Boaz
on the threshing-floor at night some pro-
saic souls have professed to find some-
thing lacking in modesty and woman-
liness. Apologies are wasted words on
such. Those who cannot see the simpli-
city of a pure heart are so remote from
the fair fields of poetry that a moonlit
night would have to explain itself to
them. Boaz did not misunderstand
Ruth; neither should we, if we were
possessed of that poetry which was in
him.

He comprehended Ruth: he was a
man: he was a poet: he loved the moon-
light and the smell of the new-reaped
barley: he slept out of doors under the
drench of dew and balm of starlight and
wonder of the night. Ruth appealed to





THE BOOK OF RUTH

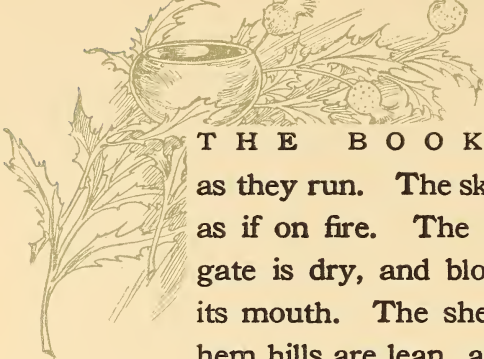
him as doing not a questionable thing, but a beautiful thing. Nobody but poets should write commentaries on some of the Bible books. King David would not have misunderstood Ruth; and we must not. She was simply a maiden heart, wise only in sorrow and in poverty and chastity, and did those accustomed things as lovers betroth each other with a kiss. No word was on her lips. She lay at his feet awake, obedient to her mother's admonition, and rose at dawn while the early morning light shimmered along the east. Ruth, daughter of chastity, how fair thou art. You can see her in the early light, with garment weighted down with measures of barley, bringing home a happy and pure heart and bread for the impoverished Naomi and Ruth. I pity anyone who cannot see in Ruth chastity, worth, faith, love,

THE BOOK OF RUTH
loyalty, and hope, wrought into all-but-
incomparable womanhood.

The scene at Bethlehem's gate makes the world young again. Leisure and neighborliness are neighbors now. The hale voice of Boaz is breezy as breath from Ephraim's morning hills. The colloquy, the results, the public announcement of genial Boaz that the sweet Moabiteess is to be his wife — all this we hear and see. Nothing escapes the eyes of this quaint narrative.

Sad enough the sight is. All about Bethlehem is parched and bare. The time for harvest is passed; but no sickles rang and no gleaners laughed among the sheaves of wheat and on the outskirts of the sunny field. A succession of famine years has baked the soil and cracked the ground till the naked feet of hungry children crowd down the crevices





THE BOOK OF RUTH

as they run. The sky is cobalt but glows as if on fire. The well at Bethlehem's gate is dry, and blowing dust foams at its mouth. The sheep upon the Bethlehem hills are lean, and pant even in the shadows. Bethlehem folk gather in tired knots and talk only of the drought. The one theme of these once thrifty villagers is drought, drought, drought. Families once opulent landowners are now reduced to beggary; for of what wealth-use is a land baked like a potsherd—a land whipped with the bitter flails of famine? They are land poor. Servant and master alike are at starvation's brink. They look down this chasm, deeper than the Kidron's as it deepens towards the Dead Sea's brim. Famine—grim, surly, pitiless—is here, and as some somber spirits think and say—for somber souls are swift at saying—the dearth is perpetual.

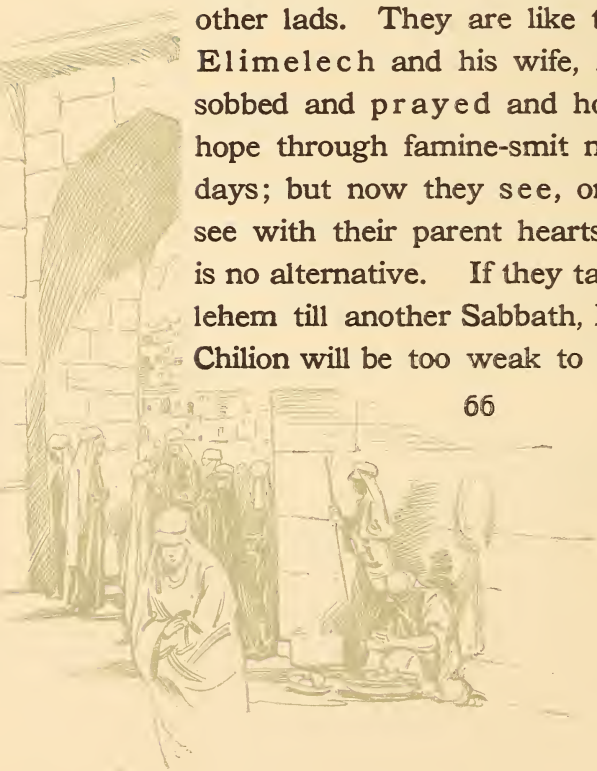
THE BOOK OF RUTH

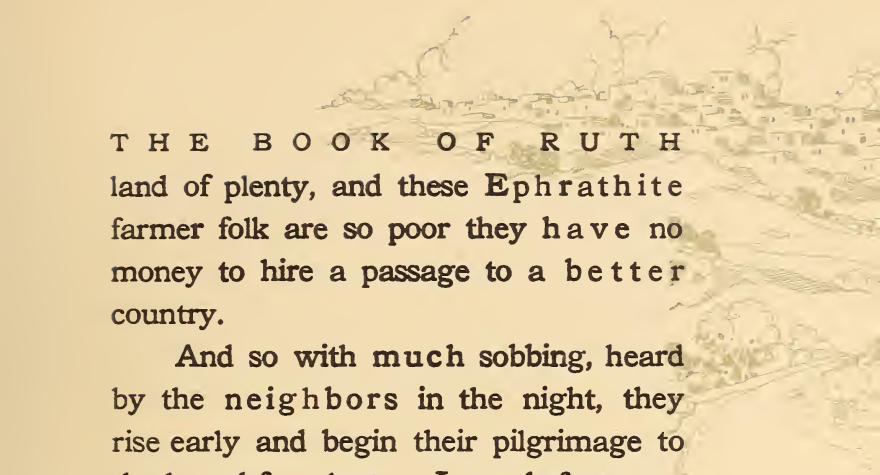
It cannot rain. Are not the heavens burned out? Are not the rain bottles withered with the fervent heats? At night there is no dew. You lie out the hot night through but cannot sleep. Night is hot as day, the sleepless think. The sick die at night. No breath of wind from the hills of Ephraim breathes down like the wafting of a prayer. Men and women and children haunt the sunset to see if some dim cloud shall not shadow the sun's going down. They watch in vain. The glow of sunset is as the glow of noon, only a sun like a huge coal, red as blood, lies on the hearth of the west and fairly melts the hilltops with its ardency. Sunset is hot as sun-noon; and midnight is hot as midday, so the panting, sleepless folks say each to the other as they walk the midnight streets or fields fainting for a breath of



THE BOOK OF RUTH air.

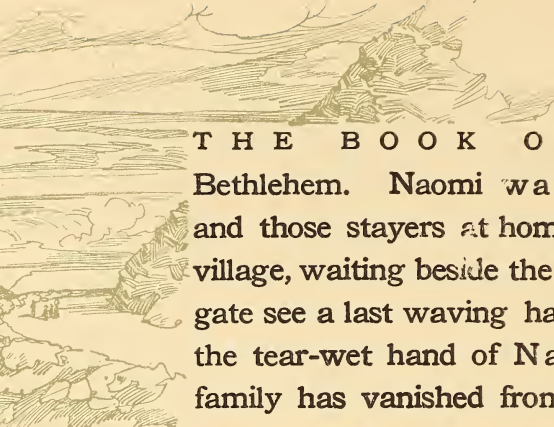
A citizen of Bethlehem, Elimelech, has sold his land for a song. His wife has grown haggard with the famine and the heat—and his two sons—likely lads, but weakly from their birth—are all but dead. They can scarce stand even in the shadow. Their parents have had hard work to bring them through the ailments of childhood to this rim of manhood. They are in their teens, but pale at the best and never strong like other lads. They are like to die. And Elimelech and his wife, Naomi, had sobbed and prayed and hoped against hope through famine-smit nights and days; but now they see, or think they see with their parent hearts, that there is no alternative. If they tarry in Bethlehem till another Sabbath, Mahlon and Chilion will be too weak to walk to the





T H E B O O K O F R U T H
land of plenty, and these Ephrathite
farmer folk are so poor they have no
money to hire a passage to a better
country.

And so with much sobbing, heard
by the neighbors in the night, they
rise early and begin their pilgrimage to
the hoped-for plenty. Long before sun-
rise they have looked sadly on the home
they left. Naomi has kissed the wall
where her little child lay when she died
and has left the rain of her salt tears to
dry there like a libation. Early as the
morning is, Orientwise the village folks
are on the streets and rolling hills. And
those who stay and those who go give
kisses and embraces, and sob aloud:
"Shall we meet again?" And this once
wealthy family has trudged slowly over
the hills, stopping to take a last tearful
and pathetic look at Bethlehem, dear

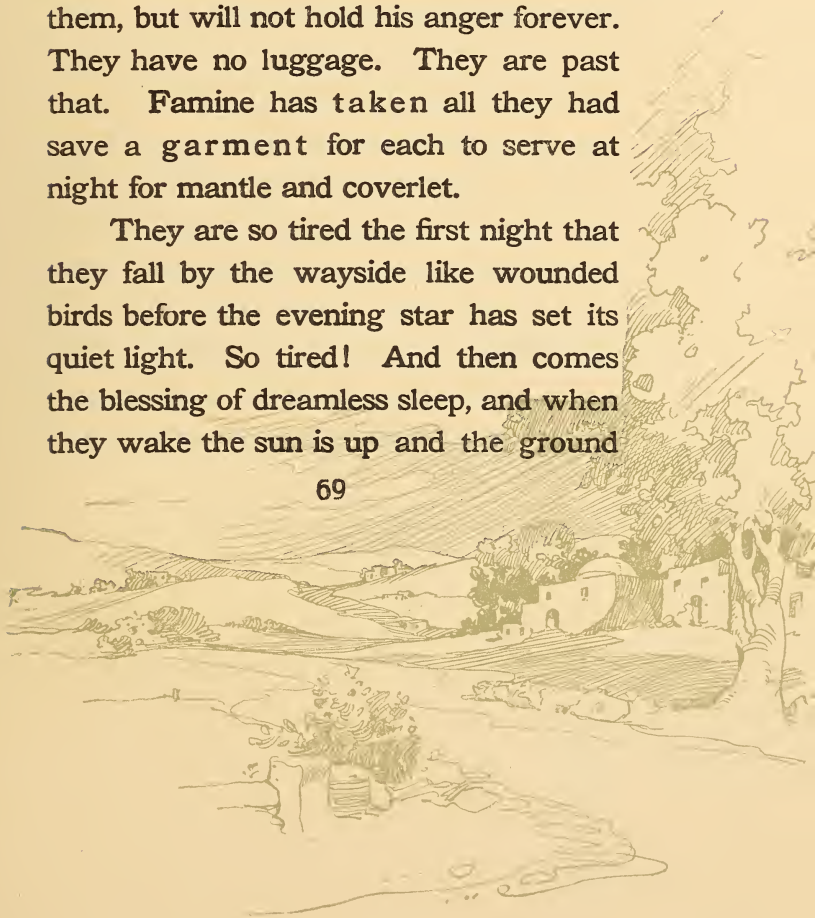


THE BOOK OF RUTH
Bethlehem. Naomi watches longest;
and those stayers at home in the famine
village, waiting beside the well before the
gate see a last waving hand of farewell,
the tear-wet hand of Naomi, and the
family has vanished from the sight of
such as loved and valued them.

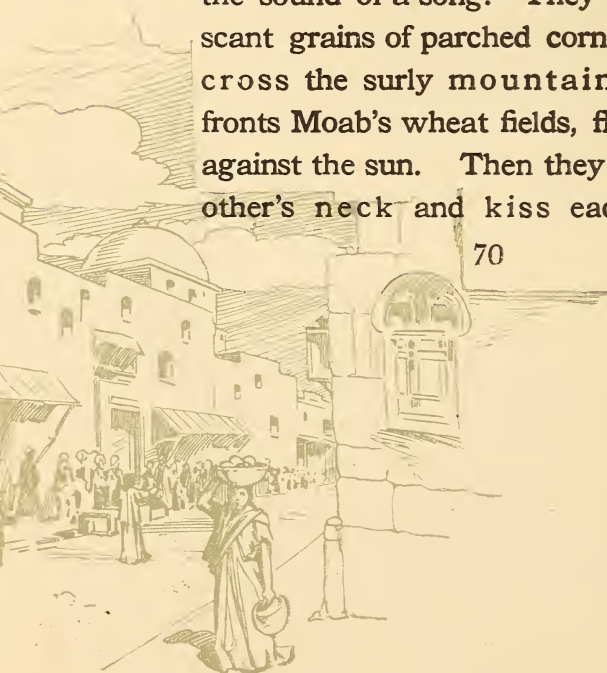
Elimelech has heard that in south
Moab the crop is good and laborers are
wanted and drought is not thought of.
He thitherward journeys. He cannot
haste. Mother and children stagger at
times, and must rest pathetically often
beneath the burning shadow of the rock.
And Naomi faints betimes with home-
sickness and hunger, but, motherlike,
thinks only of her sons. In her gar-
ments, tied up like jewels for precious-
ness, she has a few handful of parched
corn which the kindly neighbors took
from their scant store and thrust into her

THE BOOK OF RUTH
hands at parting. These she doles out to the fainting lads and the husband, who helps in turn wife and sons in the fatigue of the sad exodus. The road leads downhill. That is a mercy; and for that mercy when the day is done they four render thanks to God, who, though he seems not to hearken to their petitions, they still in heart believe has not forgotten them; he is angered with them, but will not hold his anger forever. They have no luggage. They are past that. Famine has taken all they had save a garment for each to serve at night for mantle and coverlet.

They are so tired the first night that they fall by the wayside like wounded birds before the evening star has set its quiet light. So tired! And then comes the blessing of dreamless sleep, and when they wake the sun is up and the ground



THE BOOK OF RUTH
glitters as fire. Downhill, downhill, the
tired, famished family falters. At last
the Jordan shimmers before their wistful
eyes. The Jordan, thank God! Water,
water! Their water cruse is empty, and
shrunk with the heat, and once the Jor-
dan reached they run breast-deep into its
murmuring waters with a cry of delight,
and they lean and drink and drink; and
life begins anew. Thence onward it
seems but a step to fruitful Moab. Their
hearts are gripped with hope once more.
Life looks glad as a ruddy day. "Plenty
and home," Elimelech says to wife and
sons, though truly his saying has the
the sound of a song. They eat the last
scant grains of parched corn when they
cross the surly mountain whose top
fronts Moab's wheat fields, flashing gold
against the sun. Then they fall on each
other's neck and kiss each other's



T H E B O O K O F R U T H
cheek and fall on their knees and call out together, like a single voice: "Praise ye Jehovah, whose face shines upon us and gives us peace." Famine was behind them: plenty was before. God's hand rested upon them like a caress.

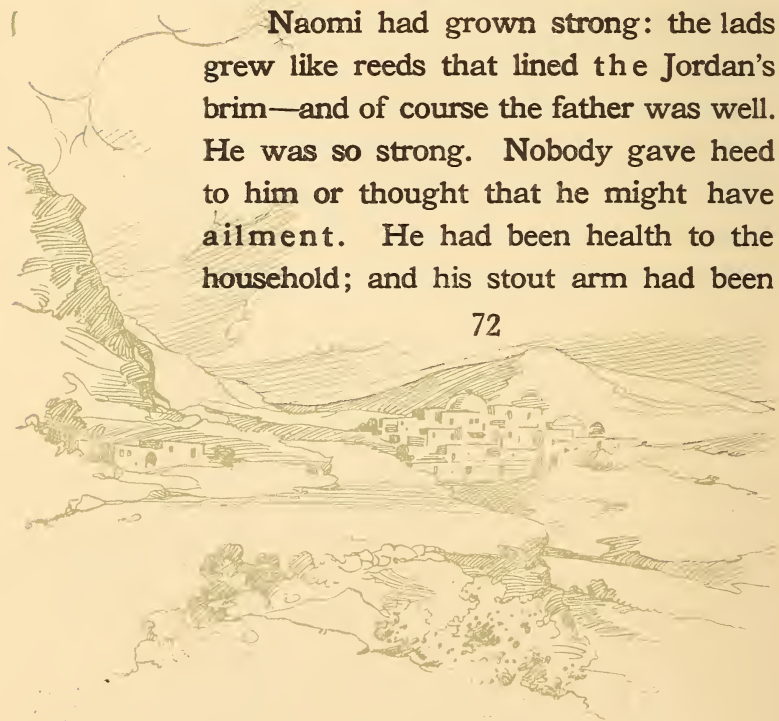
All this sad story is shadowed in the witching telling of this old holy literary artist in these scant words: "When the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Bethlehem of Judah went to sojourn in the land of Moab." Such beauty, such brevity, belong to the artist souls of men.

"And they came to Moab." They felt at home. Plainly they found the Moabites humble but wholesome folk, peaceful, neighborly, and given to quiet friendliness. When these starving refugees from Judaea's famine hills came tottering into the Moabitish borders the

THE BOOK OF RUTH

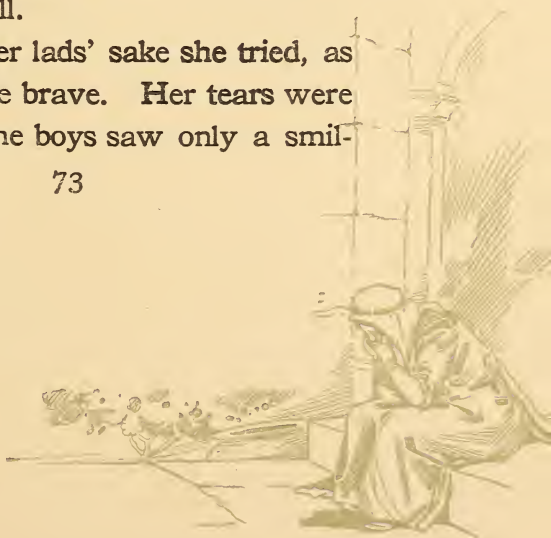
welcome they were accorded won their hearts. You may set this down as explanation why Elimelech stayed in Moab. The kindness to travelers, strangers, brought strength to their hearts, and often on summer evenings, when neighbors met in groups on the streets ruddy with sunset, Naomi with woman's volubility, would rehearse, with laughter and tears, how when they were strangers these good neighbor folk had taken them in and dealt with them not as intruders but as friends. And so they tarried and their hearts were quiet.

Naomi had grown strong: the lads grew like reeds that lined the Jordan's brim—and of course the father was well. He was so strong. Nobody gave heed to him or thought that he might have ailment. He had been health to the household; and his stout arm had been



sufficient strength to help their feebleness from Judah to Moab. But on a sudden he, the man of strength, fell sick, and lay, cheek hot with fever, all the Summer's day, and with the evening died. Then Naomi knew she had never known sorrow and had never tasted the bitter water of calamity. She thought of famine as it had been a rugged dream and no disaster. Here was famine for her heart. She held her husband's head upon her lap and sobbed his virtues forth to all the neighbors who came in to weep with her, "So sweet, so sweet," she sobbed, and when at last they buried him in spite of her entreaties to have him yet a little longer, she said her cup was running over-full.

Then for her lads' sake she tried, as women do, to be brave. Her tears were in secret; and the boys saw only a smil-

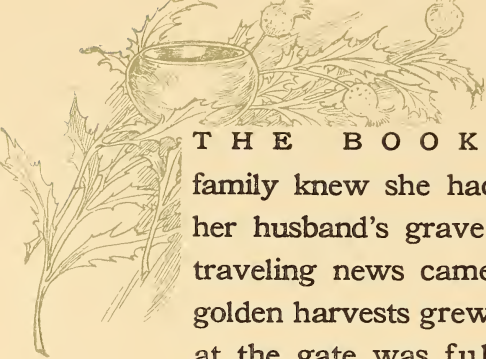


T H E B O O K O F R U T H

ing face when there mother welcomed them home from work and wooing. Some heartless woman neighbor said, "She is soon done with grieving," but she kept her heartache; and the weariness of it almost made her die. And she was seen often now, standing upon the Moab mountains looking northward and westward, always looking northward and westward. And her sons said, with a tug at the throat, "She is looking toward Bethlehem." But she lived in her boys. Their work and play were her work and play. "I live for you, my children," she would say, as all the widowed mothers since the first sunset of sorrow have ever said. "You look so like your father," was her sweet reiteration to her sons. Then they would kiss her fondly and reply: "You always say that, sweet mother."

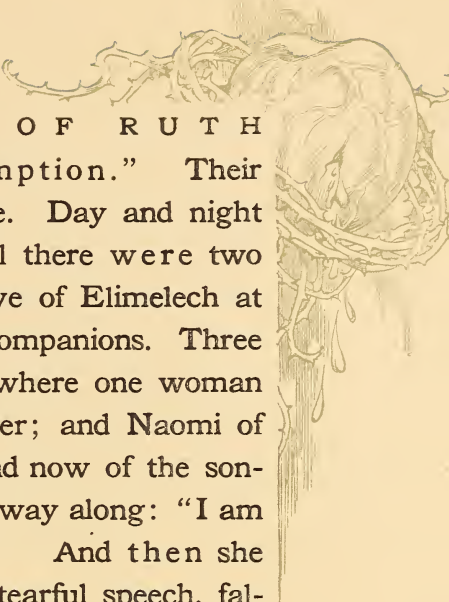
T H E B O O K O F R U T H

Then the lads were men! How that came like a surprise to their mother! They were babes, fairly babes to her, little tots clinging to her hand or garment. Men! Why, no, not possible, surely. But each son brought to their home, to greet the gentle mother, a sweetheart, then a wife. Chilion wedded Orpah, Mahlon wedded Ruth. And to them in their honeymoon Naomi flowered out into the poetry of telling of when she was first called wife by the dearest husband woman ever had. Now, Naomi had the faculty, infrequent among mothers, of loving and enjoying her daughters-in-law. She took them to her heart for daughters and was glad, for had she not always had a longing for a daughter of her own? Ofttimes she was not found at home, and came back at last with tears warm and wet on her cheek, and the



THE BOOK OF RUTH

family knew she had been weeping at her husband's grave. Sometimes slow-traveling news came that at Bethlehem golden harvests grew again, and the well at the gate was full of water, and the land laden with sunny harvests, had forgotten it was ever harvestless and parched with drought. And Naomi wondered, if they had stayed the famine out, if her husband had not still been with her. Then her eyes could not discern the near and could only see the far. But she was happy, for all, with a sort of Indian summer happiness. The joy of seeing her happy sons and daughters gave her lips a song sometimes when she knew it not. But the young men, like their father, grew wan and weak, and no physician could stay their disease. They had been weakly all their lives, even as babes, for "Mahlon" meant "sickness" and "Chil-



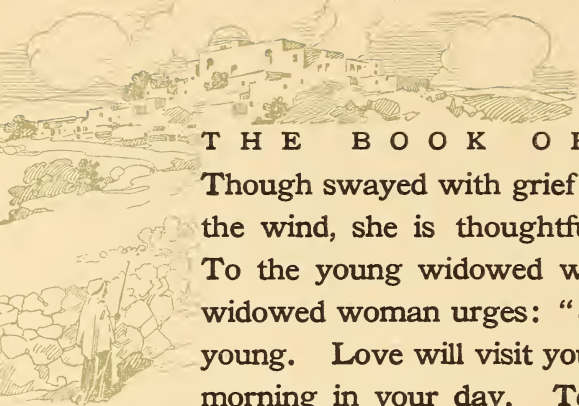
THE BOOK OF RUTH
ion" meant "consumption." Their
cough was incorrigible. Day and night
they wasted away till there were two
funerals; and the grave of Elimelech at
the village edge had companions. Three
women wept there where one woman
had been sole mourner; and Naomi of
the widowed heart, and now of the son-
less heart, sobbed her way along: "I am
all alone, all alone." And then she
would stumble in her tearful speech, fal-
ter to her knees, and pray: "The Lord
Jehovah help me or I die." And the
Lord heard her and helped her. Her bit-
terness was not all gall. The touch of
honey was in the sullen drink. God had
been her help in many years. She had
not forgotten him. Elimelech, her hus-
band, had died with the names "Naomi"
and "Jehovah" on his lips; and Mahlon
and Chilion each had died whispering:

THE BOOK OF RUTH

"My hope—is—in—God; the living — God. My hope—." But for God she had died in her day-dusk of sorrow. With God she was not utterly bereaved. No one is. God is a very present help in trouble. The sobbing centuries have confided this secret to their broken hearts. Over her heart comes a great wave of loneliness and longing for home. If she could be in Israel once again among her kinsmen, and see familiar fields and faces, her grief might be assuaged a little, so she fondly dreams. Naomi was very poor. Poor they had come from Bethlehem to Moab. Poor she must make her return from Moab to Bethlehem. But her sore heart hungered so for Bethlehem and its gray hills that she could tarry no longer. Afoot and alone, trusting only in God, she would make her weary way back to the land of her

T H E B O O K O F R U T H
girlhood and the cradle where she had
sung lullabies to her babes. The Bethle-
hem hills tugged at her heart as receding
tides tug at a boat swung at its chain.

The good-bys were all said. The
neighbors have lovingly piled in the path
of her going all the impediments they
could conceive, but finding all unavailing
bid her farewell. And her sons' widows
go with her to the hilltop to see her on
her journey, mayhap to go with her all
the way. With sweet unselfishness she
dissuades them from going. They are
young: she is old. Their life is before
them: her life is a shadow falling east-
ward. All we see in Naomi makes us
feel her an exceptionally fine nature.
Sorrow is prone to selfishness and thinks
little, or less, or none, of others, but all of
itself; Naomi's grief does not obscure
her sense of the rights of others.



THE BOOK OF RUTH

Though swayed with grief as willows by the wind, she is thoughtfulness itself. To the young widowed women the old widowed woman urges: "Stay; you are young. Love will visit you again. It is morning in your day. Tears shall dry from your cheeks, though not from mine. I love you now, and shall love you till I die. I go to my old home, heartsick as I am. You are in your own land. Abide here, where your own tongue shall make music in your ears. My land will speak a language strange to you. Go not, beloved; stay; though to part from you is bitter as the grave."

And Orpah kisses her mother and goes, weeping, back to her own mother's home, a sweet woman figure given over to the abandonment of grief. We shall not hear her name or voice again nor see her evermore. She has vanished utterly.

THE BOOK OF RUTH

Ruth, entreated, will not be entreated. Her lonely heart is such a loyal heart. She has fallen in love with her husband's God. The Infinite has got her by the hand and she must pilgrim toward him. "Thy God shall be my God," is a sounding from a deep as well as from a very true nature. Orpah kisses Naomi and leaves her; but Ruth kisses her and will not leave her. Her husband's mother is dearer to her than all Moab's land. Her mother's God answers to her broken heart. She will not let her mother wander out sad, bereft, alone. And Ruth said: "Entreat me not to leave thee; for whither thou goest, I will go and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but



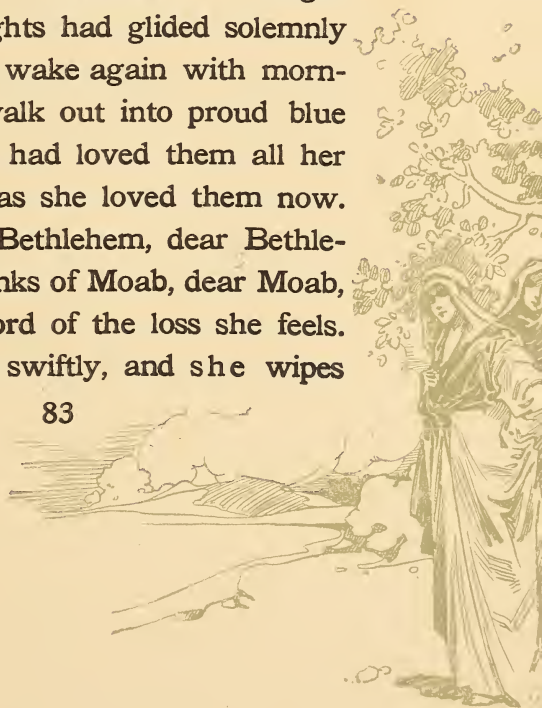
THE BOOK OF RUTH
death part thee and me.”

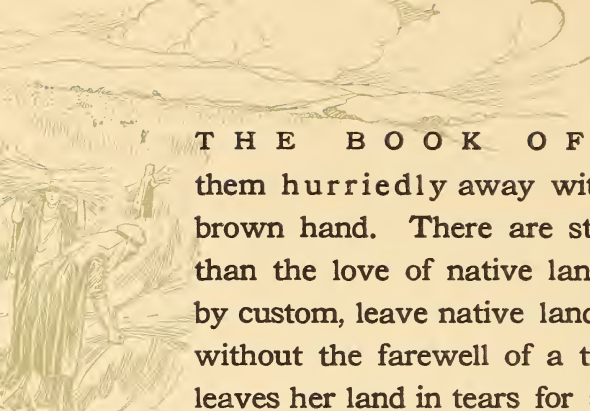
“So they two went until they came to Bethlehem.” Sweeter things than that are not written. Scant wonder Ruth has gotten into poet hearts wherever her story has been rehearsed. You cannot forget a woman like this. The return of Naomi, bereft of sons and husband, had been made utterly alone but for Ruth. To Naomi’s anticipation the journey was to have been made without company: a sole woman making slow journey toward her fatherland with steps that faltered, with eyes that sometimes could not see for weeping. Going home! “Good-by,” she said; “good-by!” Ruth clung to her. Her return is not companionless. She shall weep; but she shall not weep alone. Commingled tears are less bitter than solitary tears.

So these two take their journey.

THE BOOK OF RUTH

They are pathetically poor, yet they are more pathetically alone. Their loneliness drowns their penury. Along the valley they walk, talking. Talk eases a woman's heart. The blue mountains of Moab stand off at lonely removes. The more distant mountains are purple. Ruth looks at them wistfully. She shall not see them any more. And she was born to them. Morn and noon and night, they have filled her heart and sky since she knew to remember! At night their purple heights had glided solemnly into darkness to wake again with morning light and walk out into proud blue splendor. She had loved them all her life, but never as she loved them now. Naomi talks of Bethlehem, dear Bethlehem. Ruth thinks of Moab, dear Moab, but says no word of the loss she feels. Silent tears fall swiftly, and she wipes

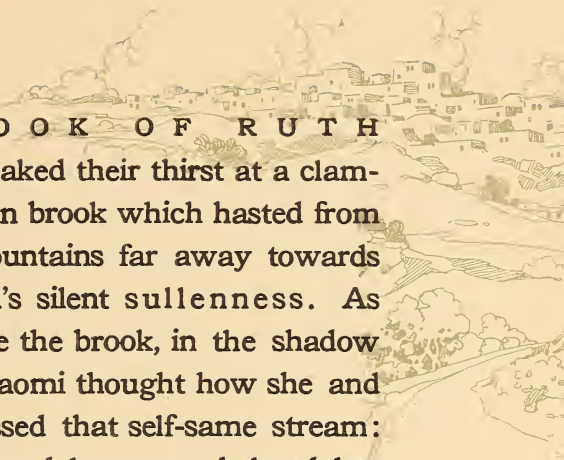




THE BOOK OF RUTH

them hurriedly away with her lithe brown hand. There are sterner loves than the love of native land. Women, by custom, leave native land for a lover without the farewell of a tear. Ruth leaves her land in tears for she is loverless, but goes with her mother and her mother's God. Ruth is a pilgrim of love and of faith. She, like another, walked "as seeing him who is invisible."

They made their journey alone. It was not over safe, but they were too poor to attract robbers and too sad to think of fear. They ate of the ripening wheatfield in Moab; for there the wheat was billowing gold along the plain. The harvest there outran the northern harvest of Bethlehem mountain lands. As they walked they caught the golden ears and rubbed the yellow kernels out between their hands and so satisfied their



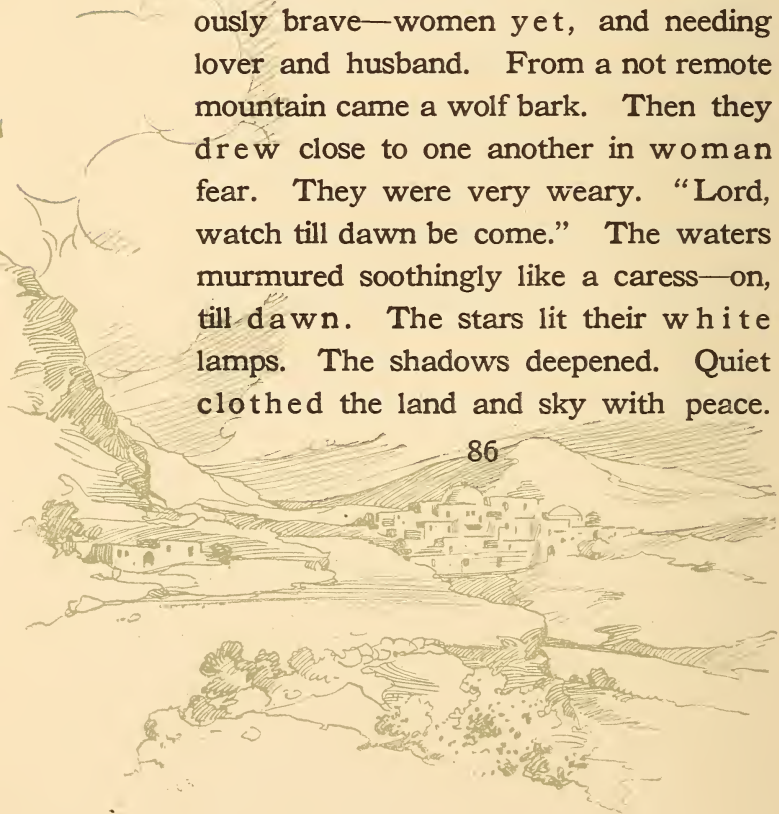
THE BOOK OF RUTH

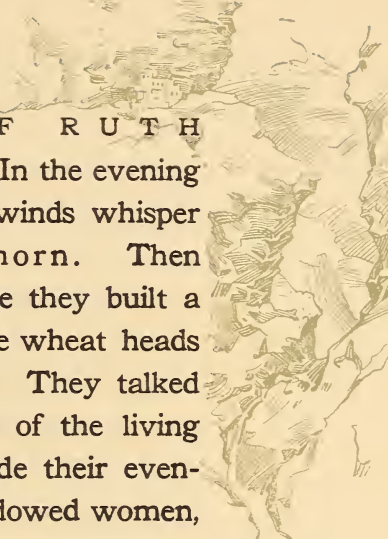
hunger, and slaked their thirst at a clamoring mountain brook which hasted from the Moab mountains far away towards the Dead Sea's silent sullenness. As they sat beside the brook, in the shadow of the rock, Naomi thought how she and hers had crossed that self-same stream: then the pain and loss overwhelmed her and she sobbed aloud—and looked toward the land of Bethlehem. Ruth sobbed in unison—and looked toward the hills of Moab's land.

Then once more they took their way. Down deep ravines, stooping to drink out of the rushing brook; past steep places where shadows lurk till noon has almost come, up gentle acclivities which seemed meant for tired feet and tired hearts—and then Naomi caught Ruth's hand with a cry and sang out like laughter: "The Jordan!" There

THE BOOK OF RUTH

it lay, a line of smirched silver far below. Beyond, the yellow hills of Israel climbed to a sky all amethyst. Southward, there lay the all-but-level Moab mountains, so blue and beautiful, built like a straight partition wall against the sky. North and east a mountain towered, a perpendicular wall of rock, looking blackly down on the Jericho plain. Westward, Bethlehem! That night they slept in the plain of Moab, They were timorously brave—women yet, and needing lover and husband. From a not remote mountain came a wolf bark. Then they drew close to one another in woman fear. They were very weary. "Lord, watch till dawn be come." The waters murmured soothingly like a caress—on, till dawn. The stars lit their white lamps. The shadows deepened. Quiet clothed the land and sky with peace.

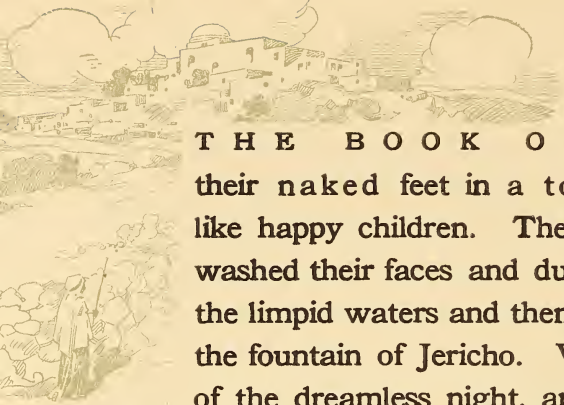




THE BOOK OF RUTH

Even their tears stopped. In the evening murk they could hear the winds whisper through the thickets of thorn. Then when night was fully come they built a camp fire and roasted some wheat heads over the perfumed flame. They talked of their dead beloved and of the living God; and to him they made their evening prayer: "O God of widowed women, be our shelter and our peace. Do not forsake us, lest we die of heartache. Amen."

And the fire burned low. The last flame expired. The glowing coals lay like a neglected sunset, then gray ashes whitened the glowing coals, and then—it was sunup. Morning skies shone in their faces. And both women laughed aloud—and wondered why they laughed. They crossed a sparkling stream margin-ed with zukkim, splashing across it with



THE BOOK OF RUTH

their naked feet in a touch of glee, like happy children. They kneeled and washed their faces and dusky bosoms in the limpid waters and then they drank of the fountain of Jericho. With the quiet of the dreamless night, and the coming of the sunrise, and the touch of the cooling waters on lips and breast, comfort came and they took their journey with a song, a psalm of gladness. Life was sweet once more. God had heard their prayer. God's peace was their recompense.

The road was familiar to Naomi; not only because she had trod this way in her journey to Moab, but because now, in sight of Jericho and its plain, she was on her own ground. She was Israelite. She was about to ford the Jordan where God had made a dusty road amid the flood for Israel to troop upon. So

THE BOOK OF RUTH

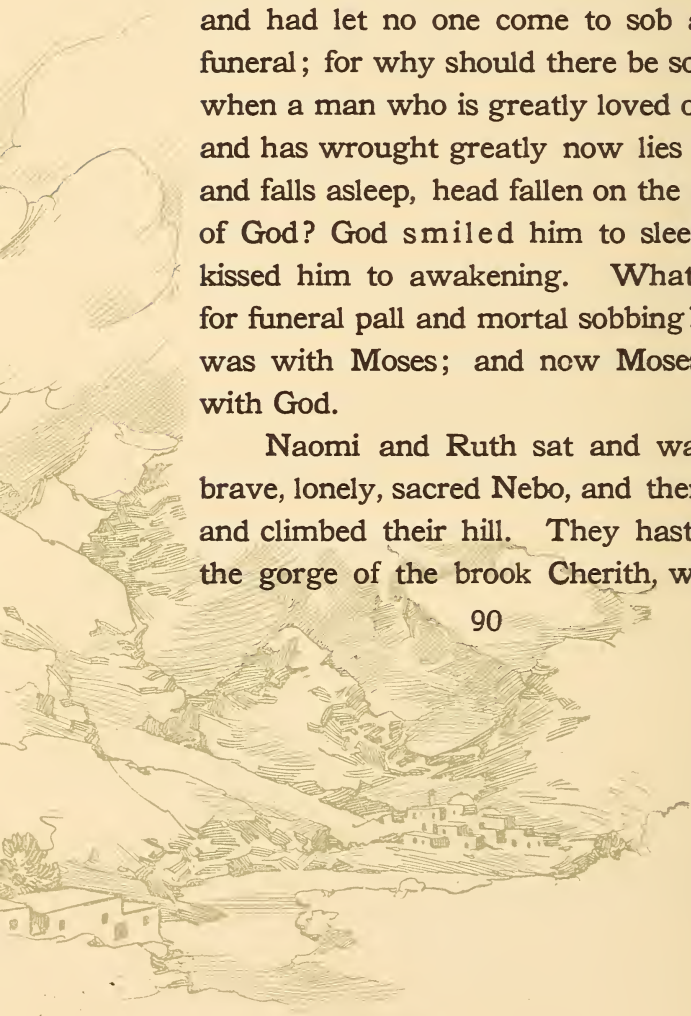
her words flow fast. She is telling Ruth what glorious things happened here. She spoke with pomp, as if she were in truth a king's daughter—seeing such a God was hers and Ruth's. The Jordan passed, the slow ascent began toward Bethlehem. In a scant six hours a horseman might ride from Jericho to Bethlehem, but these women had eager feet. They were going home. A lonely home, a bereft home, and yet, for all, a home. Dear Bethlehem!

They climbed the yellow hills. They looked backward and saw Nebo and Pisgah's height. And these women, whose only property was graves, talked of that funeral where God buried him he loved; of how no one saw Moses after he climbed the lordly hill, for God had him to himself. The woman stood and watched the stately mount, wonderful be-

THE BOOK OF RUTH

cause from that brave height Moses, the mountain soul, had with hungry eyes scanned the Promised Land and with eager lips had prayed, "Let me go over this Jordan," and God had put his hand across his servant's lips and had hushed his prayer, but had loved him utterly, and had let no one come to sob at his funeral; for why should there be sobbing when a man who is greatly loved of God and has wrought greatly now lies down and falls asleep, head fallen on the breast of God? God smiled him to sleep and kissed him to awakening. What need for funeral pall and mortal sobbing? God was with Moses; and now Moses was with God.

Naomi and Ruth sat and watched brave, lonely, sacred Nebo, and then rose and climbed their hill. They hasted by the gorge of the brook Cherith, with its



THE BOOK OF RUTH

wild and desolate beauty. The slow vultures swam along the sky. The ground burnt hot against their naked feet. Their little remnant of corn was exhausted, Their lips were parched with climbing and with thirst; but they were coming towards beautiful Bethlehem. When Naomi saw before her the yellow shoulders of a mountain silver-green with olive trees, her heart chimed like a psalm: "Near Bethlehem!" And when their tired feet stood on the hilltop, there stood, grim and majestic, Mount Moriah, and past it, like love realized, stood on its gray hills precious Bethlehem. Then their sad feet ran. They seemed to those who saw them in that springtime afternoon to be like romping children, care-free and very glad. O Bethlehem? Home Bethlehem!

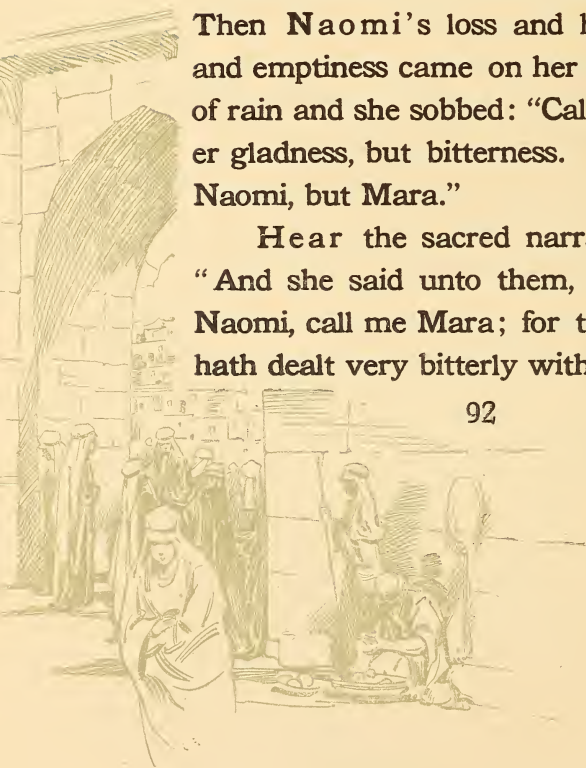
And as the sun was lowering a little

T H E B O O K O F R U T H
to watch the ripening barley fields, these two, spent with journey, footsore, heart-sore, and yet strangely heart-glad, came past Rachel's tomb and at last knelt beside the curb of the well at Bethlehem's gate and with quiet laughter drank its cool waters; and Naomi said: "No water is sweet like the waters from the well of Bethlehem's gate." And Ruth nodded and smiled acquiescence. Hearing of these lonely travelers,

From street to street the neighbors met.

Then Naomi's loss and homesickness and emptiness came on her like a drench of rain and she sobbed: "Call me no longer gladness, but bitterness. Call me not Naomi, but Mara."

Hear the sacred narrative record: "And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara; for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went

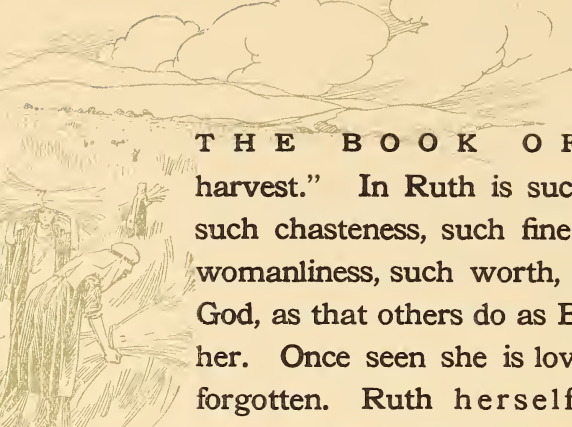


THE BOOK OF RUTH

out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty." This is sorrow and great bereavement finding tongue and voice. Famine was nothing. She went out hungry: she comes back now with the famine-hunger of her heart and thinks she then went out full. Now for the first time is she hungry. Women's hearts are the same—a sea of love and, in consequence, a sea of sorrow. No, woman with thy sorrow, thou hast Bethlehem and the Almighty and thy daughter Ruth. Her company must be computed in the reckoning. Thou hast not come back quite empty. While she is beside thee and holds thy hand thy heart need not count itself desolate.

And, once come to Bethlehem, Ruth goes out to glean along the edges of the barley field of Boaz! for "they came to Bethlehem in the beginning of barley





THE BOOK OF RUTH
harvest." In Ruth is such modesty,
such chasteness, such fine reserve, such
womanliness, such worth, such vision of
God, as that others do as Boaz did—love
her. Once seen she is loved, and never
forgotten. Ruth herself has cast her
spell on Keats; and Keats stands for the
substance of poetic mind. He is com-
pact of dreams. In his "Ode to the
Nightingale," listening to her song he,

Half in love with easeful death,
half sobs :

This is perhaps the self-same song that
found a path

Through the sad heart of Ruth when,
sick for home,

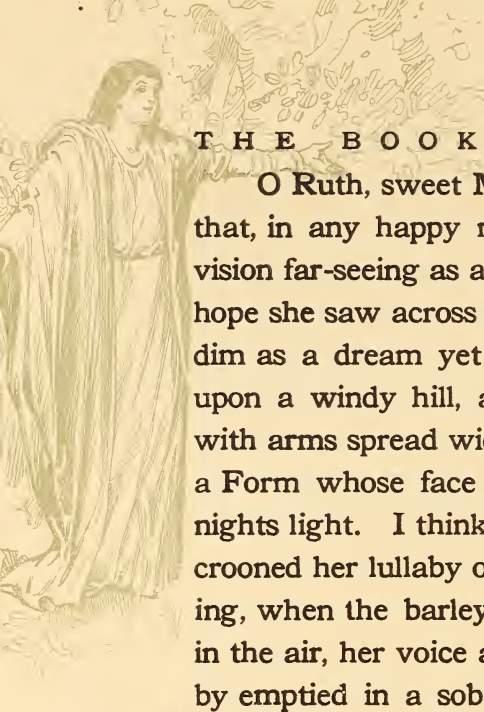
She stood in tears amid the alien corn.

Ruth after such a song as this, has de-
finitely passed into eternal poetries.

Bethlehem is at song. The reapers'
sickles and the threshing flails make not
such cheery music as the songs on Beth-

T H E B O O K O F R U T H
lehem's streets. Boaz sings. Ruth sings.
Naomi sings. Bethlehem sings. The
song is a marriage hymn. O happy,
happy Bethlehem!

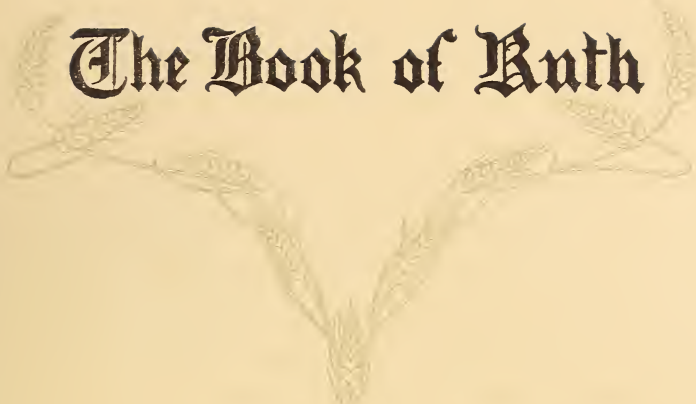
And as Ruth sang baby Obed to
sleep at twilight when earth walked out
unwittingly into summer and lovely
Bethlehem was strangely adjacent to the
set of sun and the rising of the stars, may
we wonder if ever before her happy
mother eyes there came a vision of a
throne, and a king, and a cross, and an-
other mother holding another babe and
he "the King Eternal, Immortal, Invisi-
ble, the only Wise God"? And did she
think as she sang her happy mother lull-
aby that she, Ruth, the Moabitess, was
ancestress of David, king, and David's
King, the Christ Messiah? At Bethle-
hem asleep in the hay the King, Ruth's
King, our King, but her son!



THE BOOK OF RUTH

O Ruth, sweet Moabiteess, knew you that, in any happy moment of maternal vision far-seeing as a gift of prophecy? I hope she saw across the crowding years, dim as a dream yet certain as the sun, upon a windy hill, a gaunt, grim cross with arms spread wide and on the cross a Form whose face makes murky mid-nights light. I think she saw; for as she crooned her lullaby one springtime evening, when the barley harvest smell was in the air, her voice ached and her lullaby emptied in a sob; and her tears ran and spilt hot on baby Obed's face so that he wakened with a cry, whereat she held him close and sang: "I saw what seemed a sword, huge as an oak tree, and nailed upon the sword a face like thine, my babe, like thine grown into manhood—like thine—and God's. My babe, my babe, my Obed, sleep, sleep."

The Book of Ruth

A decorative flourish consisting of two symmetrical, leafy branches that curve upwards and outwards from a central point below the title, framing the text.

THE BOOK *of* RUTH



OW it came to pass in the days when the judges ruled, that there was a famine in the land. And a certain man of Beth-lehem-judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he, and his wife, and his two sons.

And the name of the man was Elimelech, and the name of his wife Naomi, and the name of his two sons Mahlon and Chilion, Ephrathites of Beth-lehem-judah. And they came into the country of Moab, and continued there.

And Elimelech Naomi's husband died; and she was left, and her two sons.

And they took them wives of the



T H E B O O K O F R U T H
women of Moab; the name of the one
was Orpah, and the name of the other
Ruth: and they dwelled there about ten
years.

And Mahlon and Chilion died also
both of them; and the woman was left
of her two sons and her husband.

Then she arose with her daughters
in law, that she might return from the
country of Moab: for she had heard in
the country of Moab how that the LORD
had visited his people in giving them
bread.

Wherefore she went forth out of
the place where she was, and her two
daughters in law with her; and they
went on the way to return unto the land
of Judah.

And Naomi said unto her two
daughters in law, Go, return each to her
Mother's house: the LORD deal kindly

T H E B O O K O F R U T H

with you, as ye have dealt with the dead, and with me.

The LORD grant you that ye may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband. Then she kissed them; and they lifted up their voice, and wept.

And they said unto her, Surely we will return with thee unto thy people.

And Naomi said, Turn again, my daughters: why will ye go with me? are there yet any more sons in my womb, that they may be your husbands?

Turn again, my daughters, go your way; for I am too old to have an husband. If I should say, I have hope, if I should have an husband also to night, and should also bear sons;

Would ye tarry for them till they were grown? would ye stay for them from having husbands? nay, my daughters; for it grieveth me much for your

THE BOOK OF RUTH

sakes that the hand of the LORD is gone out against me.

And they lifted up their voice, and wept again: and Orpah kissed her mother in law; but Ruth clave unto her.

And she said, Behold, thy sister in law is gone back unto her people, and unto her gods: return thou after thy sister in law.

And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge; thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God:

Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.

When she saw that she was sted-

THE BOOK OF RUTH

fastly minded to go with her, then she left speaking unto her.

So they two went until they came to Beth-lehem. And it came to pass, when they were come to Beth-lehem, that all the city was moved about them, and they said, Is this Naomi?

And she said unto them, Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me.

I went out full, and the LORD hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the LORD hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?

So Naomi returned, and Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter in law, with her, which returned out of the country of Moab: and they came to Beth-lehem in the beginning of barley harvest.



AND Naomi had a kinsman of her husband's, a mighty man of wealth, of the family of Elimelech; and his name was Boaz.

And Ruth the Moabitess said unto Naomi, Let me now go to the field, and glean ears of corn after him in whose sight I shall find grace. And she said unto her, Go, my daughter.

And she went, and came, and gleaned in the field after the reapers: and her hap was to light on a part of the field belonging unto Boaz, who was of the kindred of Elimelech.

And, behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said unto the reapers, The LORD be with you. And they answered him, The LORD bless thee.

Then said Boaz unto his servant

THE BOOK OF RUTH

that was set over the reapers, Whose damsel is this?

And the servant that was set over the reapers answered and said, It is the Moabitish damsel that came back with Naomi out of the country of Moab:

And she said, I pray you, let me glean and gather after the reapers among the sheaves: so she came, and hath continued even from the morning until now, that she tarried a little in the house.

Then said Boaz unto Ruth, Hearest thou not, my daughter? Go not to glean in another field, neither go from hence, but abide here fast by my maidens:

Let thine eyes be on the field that they do reap, and go thou after them: have I not charged the young men that they shall not touch thee? and when thou art athirst, go unto the vessels, and

T H E B O O K O F R U T H
drink of that which the young men have
drawn.

Then she fell on her face, and bowed herself to the ground, and said unto him, Why have I found grace in thine eyes, that thou shouldest take knowledge of me, seeing I am a stranger?

And Boaz answered and said unto her, It hath fully been shewed me, all that thou hast done unto thy mother in law since the death of thine husband: and how thou hast left thy father and thy mother, and the land of thy nativity, and art come unto a people which thou knewest not heretofore.

The LORD recompense thy work, and a full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.

Then she said, Let me find favor in thy sight, my lord; for that thou hast

THE BOOK OF RUTH

comforted me, and for that thou hast spoken friendly unto thine handmaid, though I be not like unto one of thine handmaidens.

And Boaz said unto her, At meal-time come thou hither, and eat of the bread, and dip thy morsel in the vinegar. And she sat beside the reapers: and he reached her parched corn, and she did eat, and was sufficed, and left.

And when she was risen up to glean, Boaz commanded his young men, saying, Let her glean even among the sheaves, and reproach her not:

And let fall also some of the handfuls of purpose for her, and leave them, that she may glean them, and rebuke her not.

So she gleaned in the field until even, and beat out that she had gleaned: and it was about an ephah of barley.

T H E B O O K O F R U T H

And she took it up, and went into the city: and her mother in law saw what she had gleaned: and she brought forth, and gave to her that she had reserved after she was sufficed.

And her mother in law said unto her, Where hast thou gleaned to-day? and where wroughtest thou? blessed be he that did take knowledge of thee. And she shewed her mother in law with whom she had wrought, and said, The man's name with whom I wrought to day is Boaz.

And Naomi said unto her daughter in law, Blessed be he of the LORD, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen.

And Ruth the Moabitess said, He said unto me also, Thou shalt keep fast

THE BOOK OF RUTH

by my young men, until they have ended all my harvest.

And Naomi said unto Ruth her daughter in law, It is good, my daughter, that thou go out with his maidens, that they meet thee not in any other field.

So she kept fast by the maidens of Boaz to glean unto the end of barley harvest and of wheat harvest; and dwelt with her mother in law.



WHEN Naomi her mother in law said unto her, My daughter, shall I not seek rest for thee, that it may be well with thee?

And now is not Boaz of our kindred, with whose maidens thou wast? Behold, he winnoweth barley to night in the threshingfloor.

Wash thyself therefore, and anoint

T H E B O O K O F R U T H

thee, and put thy raiment upon thee, and get thee down to the floor: but make not thyself known unto the man, until he shall have done eating and drinking.

And it shall be, when he lieth down, that thou shall mark the place where he shall lie, and thou shalt go in, and uncover his feet, and lay thee down; and he will tell thee what thou shalt do.

And she said unto her, All that thou sayest unto me I will do,

And she went down unto the floor, and did according to all that her mother in law bade her.

And when Boaz had eaten and drunk, and his heart was merry, he went to lie down at the end of the heap of corn: and she came softly, and uncovered his feet, and laid her down.

And it came to pass at midnight, that the man was afraid, and turned him-

T H E B O O K O F R U T H

self: and, behold, a woman lay at his feet.

And he said, Who art thou? And she answered, I am Ruth thine handmaid: spread therefore thy skirt over thine handmaid; for thou art a near kinsman.

And he said, Blessed be thou of the LORD, my daughter: for thou hast shewed more kindness in the latter end than at the beginning, inasmuch as thou followedst not young men, whether poor or rich.

And now, my daughter, fear not; I will do to thee all that thou requirest: for all the city of my people doth know that thou art a virtuous woman.

And now it is true that I am thy near kinsman: howbeit there is a kinsman nearer than I.

Tarry this night, and it shall be in

T H E B O O K O F R U T H

the morning, that if he will perform unto thee the part of a kinsman, well; let him do the kinsman's part: but if he will not do the part of a kinsman to thee, then will I do the part of a kinsman to thee, as the LORD liveth: lie down until the morning.

And she lay at his feet until the morning: and she rose up before one could know another. And he said, Let it not be known that a woman came in-to the floor.

Also he said, Bring the veil that thou hast upon thee, and hold it. And when she held it, he measured six measures of barley, and laid it on her: and she went into the city.

And when she came to her mother in law, she said, Who art thou, my daughter? And she told her all that the man had done to her.

THE BOOK OF RUTH

And she said, These six measures of barley gave he me; for he said to me, Go not empty unto thy mother in law.

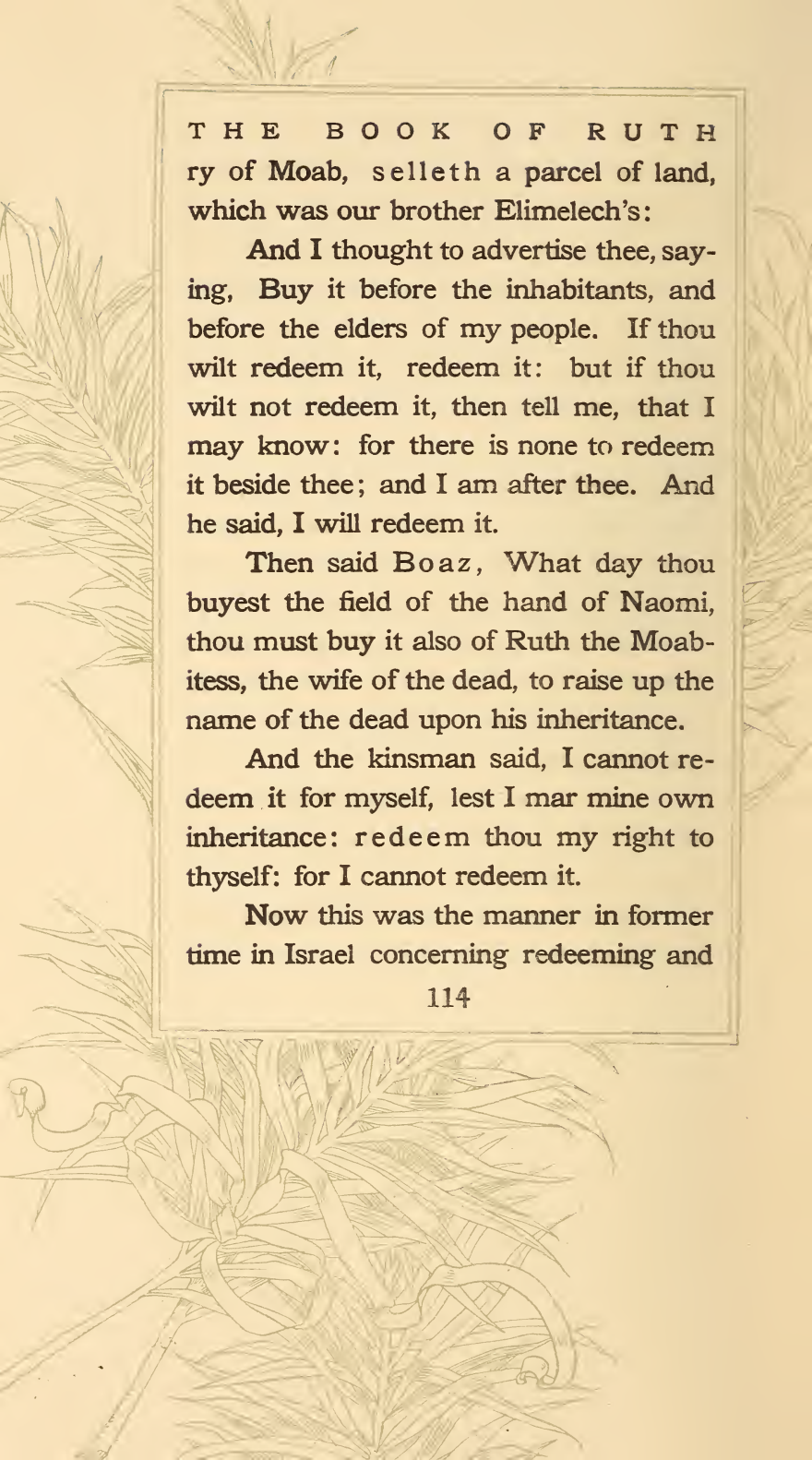
Then said she, Sit still, my daughter, until thou know how the matter will fall; for the man will not be in rest, until he have finished the thing this day.



THEN went Boaz up to the gate, and sat him down there: and, behold, the kinsman of whom Boaz spake came by; unto whom he said, Ho, such a one! turn aside, sit down here. And he turned aside, and sat down.

And he took ten men of the elders of the city, and said, Sit ye down here. And they sat down.

And he said unto the kinsman, Naomi, that is come again out of the count-



THE BOOK OF RUTH
ry of Moab, selleth a parcel of land,
which was our brother Elimelech's:

And I thought to advertise thee, saying, Buy it before the inhabitants, and before the elders of my people. If thou wilt redeem it, redeem it: but if thou wilt not redeem it, then tell me, that I may know: for there is none to redeem it beside thee; and I am after thee. And he said, I will redeem it.

Then said Boaz, What day thou buyest the field of the hand of Naomi, thou must buy it also of Ruth the Moabitess, the wife of the dead, to raise up the name of the dead upon his inheritance.

And the kinsman said, I cannot redeem it for myself, lest I mar mine own inheritance: redeem thou my right to thyself: for I cannot redeem it.

Now this was the manner in former time in Israel concerning redeeming and

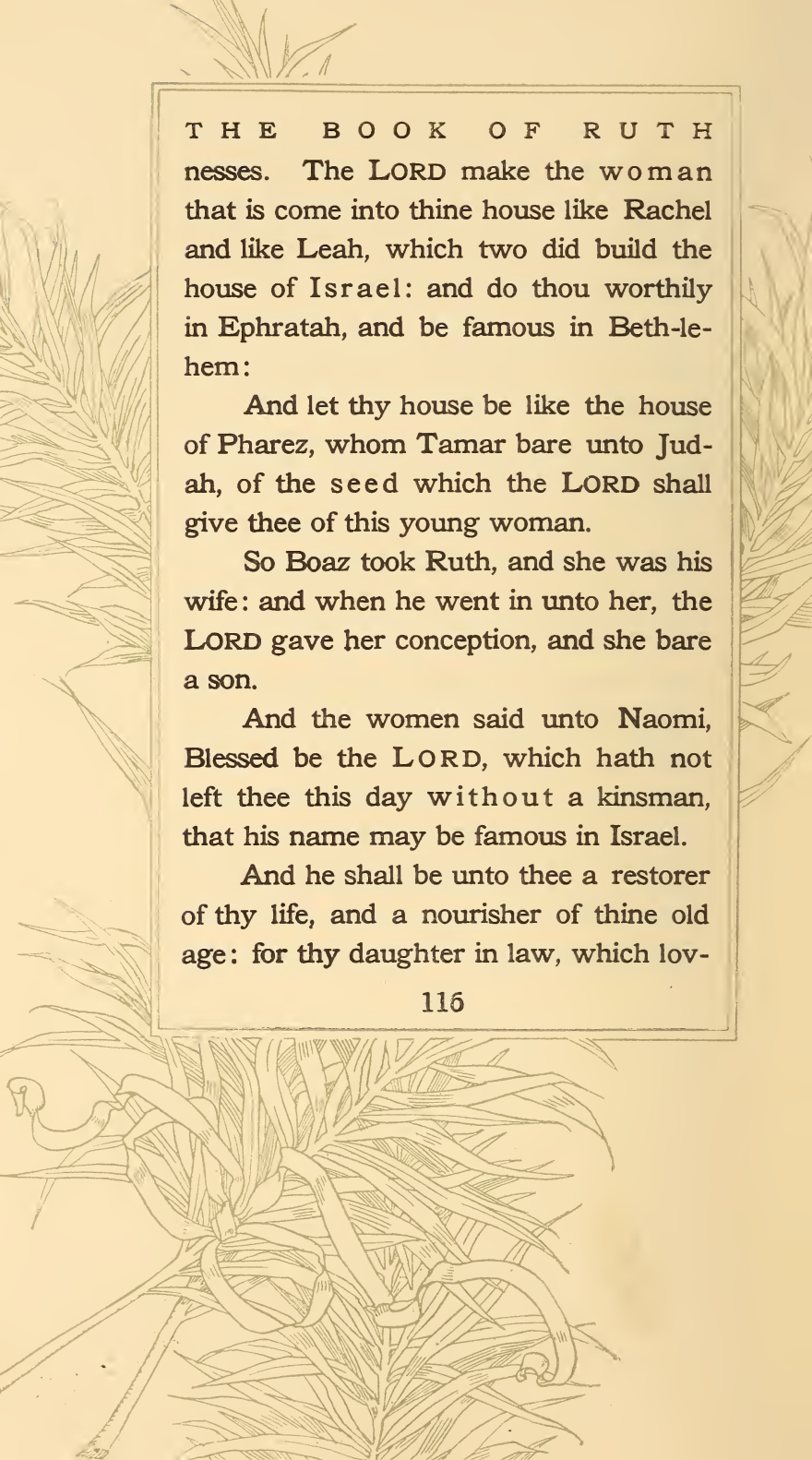
THE BOOK OF RUTH
concerning changing, for to confirm all
things; a man plucked off his shoe, and
gave it to his neighbour: and this was
a testimony in Israel.

Therefore the kinsman said unto
Boaz, Buy it for thee. So he drew off
his shoe.

And Boaz said unto the elders, and
unto all the people, Ye are witnesses this
day, that I have bought all that was Eli-
melech's, and all that was Chilion's and
Mahlon's, of the hand of Naomi.

Moreover Ruth the Moabitess, the
wife of Mahlon, have I purchased to be
my wife, to raise up the name of the
dead upon his inheritance, that the name
of the dead be not cut off from among
his brethren, and from the gate of his
place: ye are witnesses this day.

And all the people that were in the
gate, and the elders, said, We are wit-

A decorative border of wheat stalks with long, slender leaves and small seed heads, rendered in a simple line-art style, surrounds the central text box.

THE BOOK OF RUTH
nesses. The LORD make the woman
that is come into thine house like Rachel
and like Leah, which two did build the
house of Israel: and do thou worthily
in Ephratah, and be famous in Beth-le-
hem:

And let thy house be like the house
of Pharez, whom Tamar bare unto Jud-
ah, of the seed which the LORD shall
give thee of this young woman.

So Boaz took Ruth, and she was his
wife: and when he went in unto her, the
LORD gave her conception, and she bare
a son.

And the women said unto Naomi,
Blessed be the LORD, which hath not
left thee this day without a kinsman,
that his name may be famous in Israel.

And he shall be unto thee a restorer
of thy life, and a nourisher of thine old
age: for thy daughter in law, which lov-

T H E B O O K O F R U T H
eth thee, which is better to thee than
seven sons, hath born him.

And Naomi took the child, and laid
it in her bosom, and became nurse unto
it.

And the women her neighbors gave
it a name, saying, There is a son born to
Naomi; and they called him Obed: he is
the father of Jesse, the father of David.

Now these are the generations of
Pharez: Pharez begat Hezron.

And Hezron begat Ram, and Ram
begat Amminadab.

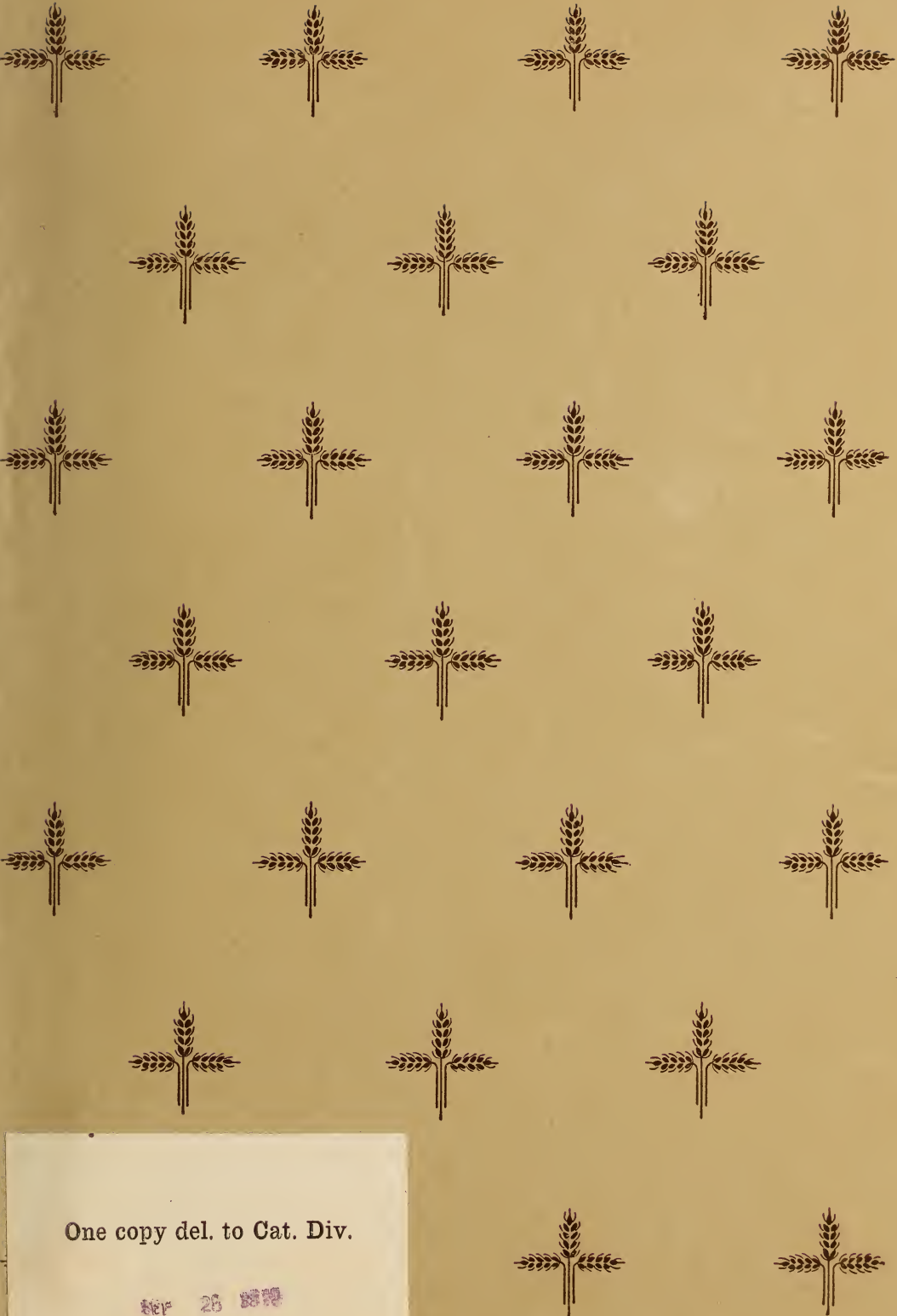
And Amminadab begat Nahshon,
and Nahshon begat Salmon.

And Salmon begat Boaz, and Boaz
begat Obed.

And Obed begat Jesse, and Jesse
begat David.



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